



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

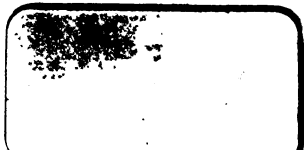
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

827
T4
3J
v.1

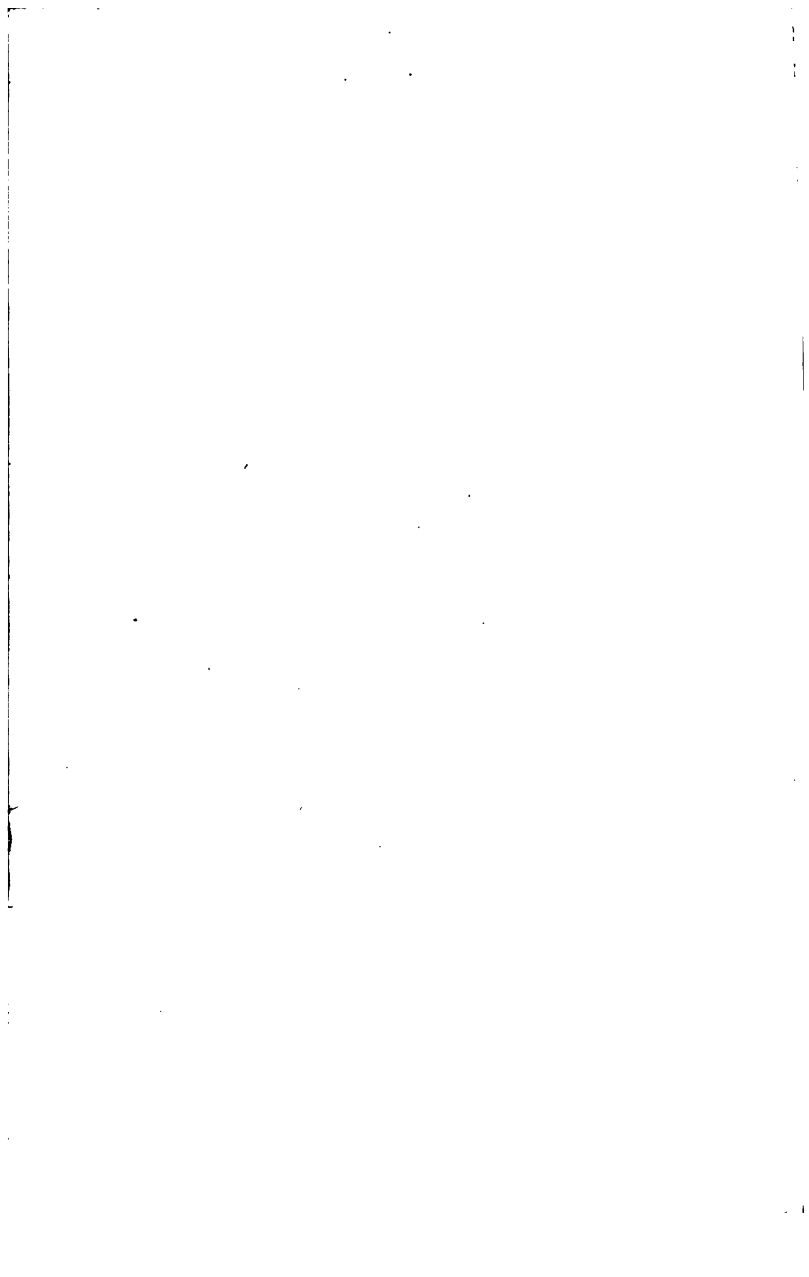


IN MEMORY OF BESSIE HINCKS
BORN APRIL 11 1865 · DIED JULY 5 1885





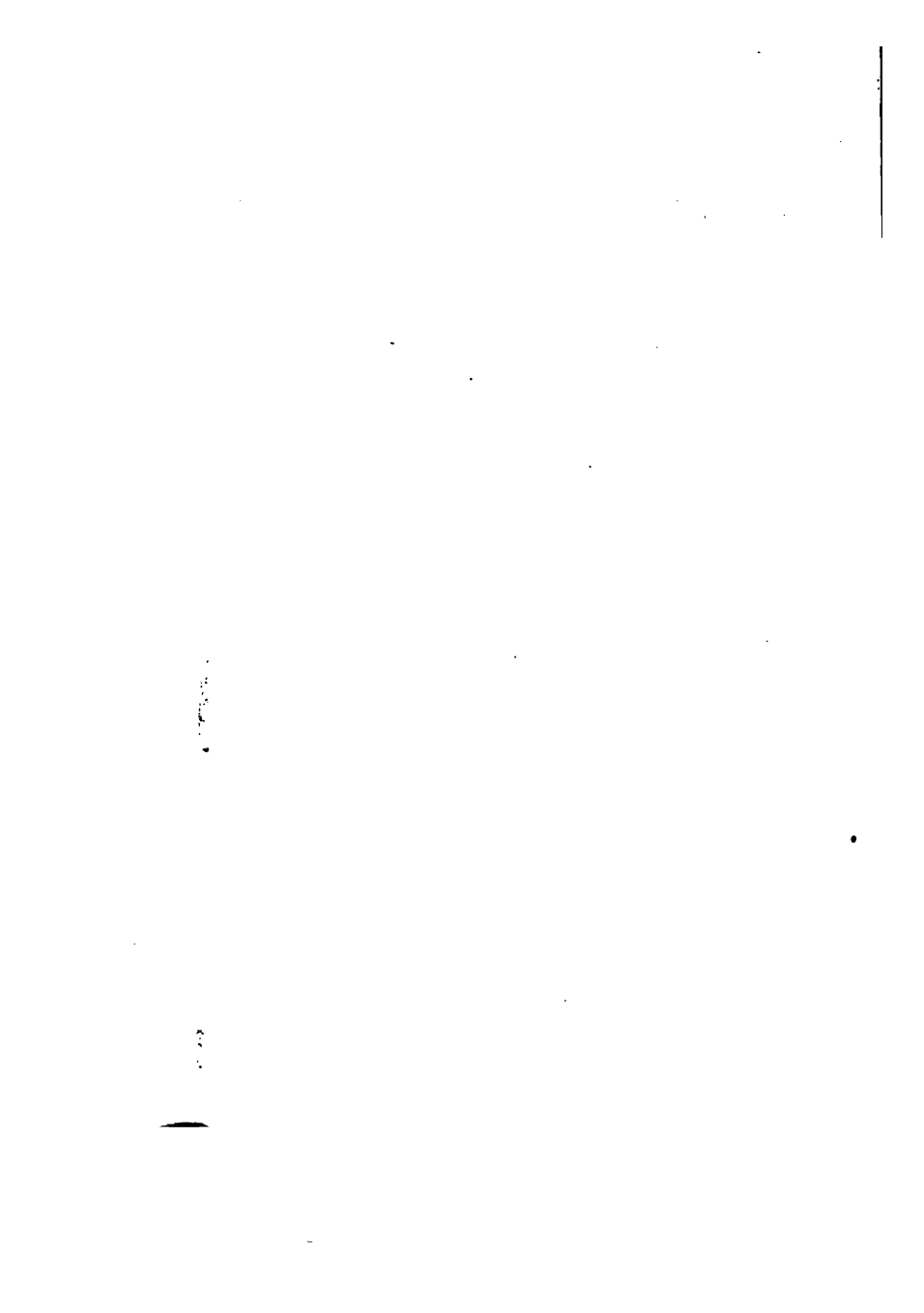




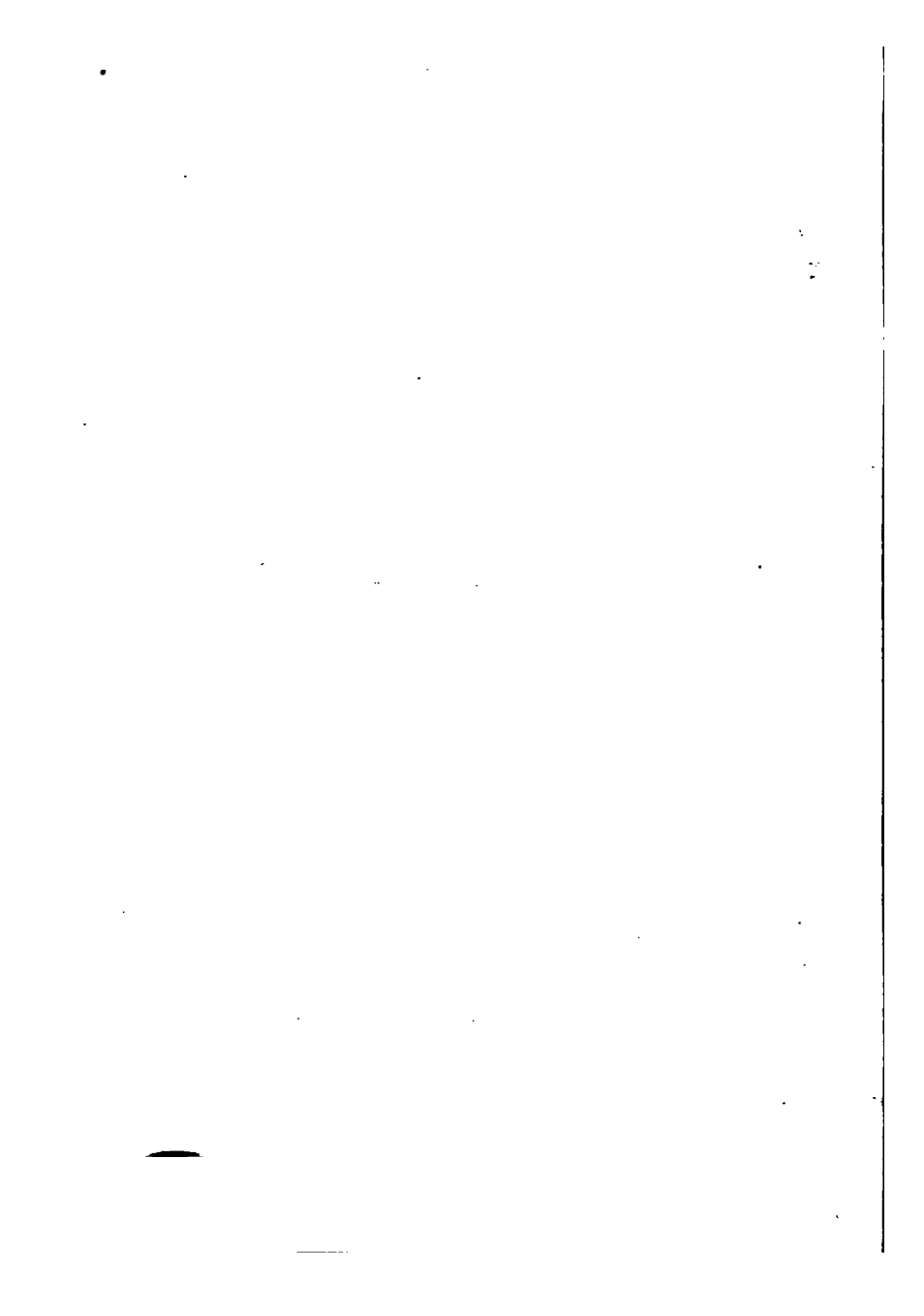


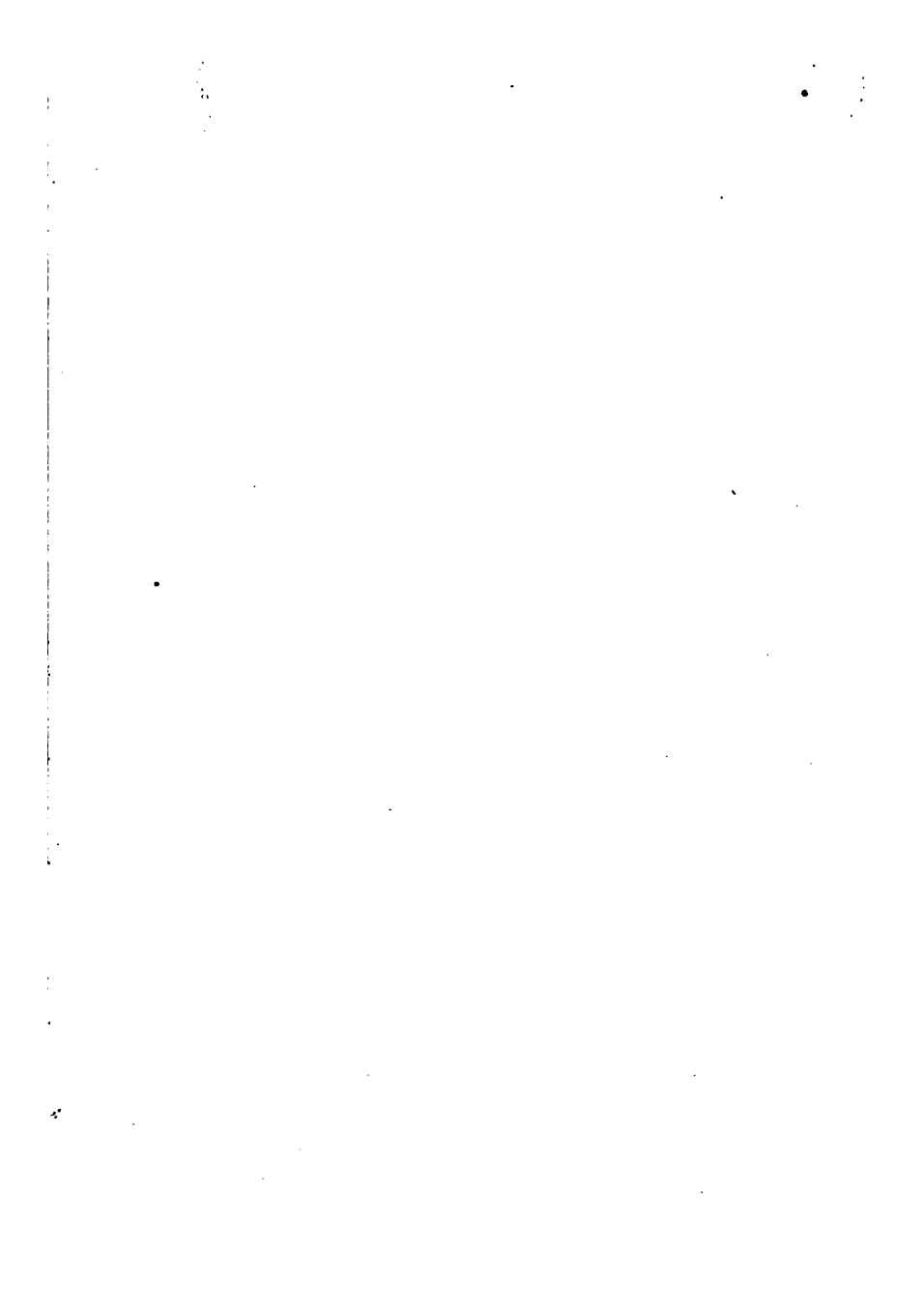
1





JOHN CALDIGATE







JOHN CALDIGATE

BY
ANTHONY TROLLOPE

FRONTISPIECE BY
WALTER H. EVERETT

VOL. I

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY

1907
S

30686

Bessie Hincks Fund.

827

T 4

3 J

v. 1

CONTENTS VOL. I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I FOLKING	I
II PURITAN GRANGE	12
III DANIEL CALDIGATE	23
IV THE SHANDS	34
V THE GOLDFINDER	45
VI MRS. SMITH	56
VII THE THREE ATTEMPTS	68
VIII REACHING MELBOURNE	79
IX NOBBLE	90
X POLYEUKA HALL	100
XI AHALALA	111
XII MADEMOISELLE CETTINI	122
XIII COMING BACK	133
XIV AGAIN AT HOME	144
XV AGAIN AT POLLINGTON	155
XVI AGAIN AT BABINGTON	166

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVII AGAIN AT PURITAN GRANGE	177
XVIII ROBERT BOLTON	188
XIX MEN ARE SO WICKED	199
XX HESTER'S COURAGE	210
XXI THE WEDDING	221
XXII AS TO TOUCHING PITCH	232
XXIII THE NEW HEIR	242
XXIV NEWS FROM THE GOLD MINES	253
XXV THE BABY'S SPONSORS	264
XXVI A STRANGER IN CAMBRIDGE	276
XXVII THE CHRISTENING	287
XXVIII TOM CRINKETT AT FOLKING	298
XXIX "JUST BY TELLING ME THAT I AM"	310
XXX THE CONCLAVE AT PURITAN GRANGE	321
XXXI HESTER IS LURED BACK	332
XXXII THE BABINGTON WEDDING	344

JOHN CALDIGATE

CHAPTER I

FOLKING

PERHAPS it was more the fault of Daniel Caldigate the father than of his son John Caldigate, that they two could not live together in comfort in the days of the young man's early youth. And yet it would have been much for both of them that such comfortable association should have been possible to them. Wherever the fault lay, or the chief fault—for probably there was some on both sides—the misfortune was so great as to bring crushing troubles upon each of them.

There were but the two of which to make a household. When John was fifteen, and had been about a year at Harrow, he lost his mother and his two little sisters almost at a blow. The two girls went first, and the poor mother, who had kept herself alive to see them die, followed them almost instantly. Then Daniel Caldigate had been alone.

And he was a man who knew how to live alone,—a just, hard, unsympathetic man,—of whom his neighbours said, with something of implied reproach, that he bore up strangely when he lost his wife and girls. This they said, because he was to be seen riding about the country, and because he was to be heard talking to the farmers and labourers as though nothing special had happened to him. It was rumoured of him, too,

that he was as constant with his books as before; and he had been a man always constant with his books; and also that he had never been seen to shed a tear, or been heard to speak of those who had been taken from him.

He was, in truth, a stout, self-constraining man, silent unless when he had something to say. Then he could become loud enough, or perhaps it might be said, eloquent. To his wife he had been inwardly affectionate, but outwardly almost stern. To his daughters he had been the same,—always anxious for every good thing on their behalf, but never able to make the children conscious of his anxiety. When they were taken from him, he suffered in silence, as such men do suffer; and he suffered the more because he knew well how little of gentleness there had been in his manners with them.

But he had hoped, as he sat alone in his desolate house, that it would be different with him and his only son,—with his son who was now the only thing left to him. But the son was a boy, and he had to look forward to what years might bring him rather than to present happiness from that source. When the boy came home for his holidays, the father would sometimes walk with him, and discourse on certain chosen subjects,—on the politics of the day, in regard to which Mr. Caldigate was an advanced Liberal, on the abomination of the Game Laws, on the folly of Protection, on the antiquated absurdity of a State Church;—as to all of which matters his son John lent him a very inattentive ear. Then the lad would escape and kill rabbits, or rats, or even take birds' nests, with a zest for such pursuits which was disgusting to the father, though he would not absolutely forbid them.

Then John would be allured to go to his uncle Babington's house, where there was a pony on which he could hunt, and fishing-rods, and a lake with a boat, and three fine, bouncing girl-cousins, who made much of him, and called him Jack; so that he soon preferred his uncle Babington's house, and would spend much of his holidays at Babington House.

Mr. Caldigate was a country squire with a moderate income, living in a moderate house called Folking, in the parish of Utterden, about ten miles from Cambridge. Here he owned nearly the entire parish, and some portion of Netherden, which lay next to it, having the reputation of an income of £3,000 a year. It probably amounted to about two-thirds of that. Early in life he had been a very poor man, owing to the improvidence of his father; but he had soon quarrelled with his father,—as he had with almost everyone else,—and had for some ten years earned his own bread in the metropolis among the magazines and newspapers. Then, when his father died, the property was his own, with such encumbrances as the old squire had been able to impose upon it. Daniel Caldigate had married when he was a poor man, but did not go to Folking to live till the estate was clear, at which time he was forty years old. When he was endeavouring to inculcate good Liberal principles into that son of his, who was burning the while to get off to a battle of rats among the corn stacks, he was not yet fifty. There might therefore be some time left to him for the promised joys of companionship if he could only convince the boy that politics were better than rats.

But he did not long make himself any such promise. It seemed to him that his son's mind was of a nature

very different from his own; and much like to that of his grandfather. The lad could be awakened to no enthusiasm in the abuse of Conservative leaders. And those Babingtons were such fools! He despised the whole race of them,—especially those thick-legged, romping, cherry-cheeked damsels, of whom, no doubt, his son would marry one. They were all of the earth earthy, without an idea among them. And yet he did not dare to forbid his son to go to the house, lest people should say of him that his sternness was unendurable.

Folking is not a place having many attractions of its own, beyond the rats. It lies in the middle of the Cambridgeshire fens, between St. Ives, Cambridge, and Ely. In the two parishes of Utterden and Netherden there is no rise of ground which can by any stretch of complaisance be called a hill. The property is bisected by an immense straight dyke, which is called the Middle Wash, and which is so sluggish, so straight, so ugly, and so deep, as to impress the mind of a stranger with the ideas of suicide. And there are straight roads and straight dykes, with ugly names on all sides, and passages through the country called droves, also with ugly appellations of their own, which certainly are not worthy of the name of roads. The Folking Causeway possesses a bridge across the Wash, and it is said to be the remains of an old Roman way which ran in a perfectly direct line from St. Neots to Ely. When you have crossed the bridge going northward,—or north-westward,—there is a lodge at your right hand, and a private road running, as straight as a line can be drawn, through pollard poplars, up to Mr. Caldigate's house. Round the house are meadows, and a large, old-fashioned kitchen garden, and

a small, dark flower garden, with clipped hedges and straight walks, quite in the old fashion. The house itself is dark, picturesque, well-built, low, and uncomfortable. Part of it is as old as the times of Charles II., and part dates from Queen Anne. Something was added at a later date,—perhaps early in the Georges; but it was all done with good materials, and no stint of labour. Shoddy had not been received among building materials when any portion of Folking was erected. But then neither had modern ideas of comfort become in vogue. Just behind the kitchen garden a great cross ditch, called Foul-water-Drain, runs, or rather creeps, down to the Wash, looking on that side as though it had been made to act as a moat to the house; and on the other side of the drain there is Twopenny Drove, at the end of which Twopenny Ferry leads to Twopenny Hall, a farm-house across the Wash belonging to Mr. Caldigate. The fields around are all square and all flat, all mostly arable, and are often so deep in mud that a stranger wonders that a plough should be able to be dragged through the soil. The farming is, however, good of its kind, and the ploughing is mostly done by steam.

Such is and has been for some years the house at Folking in which Mr. Caldigate has lived quite alone. For five years after his wife's death he had only on rare occasions received visitors there. Twice his brother had come to Folking, and had brought a son with him. The brother had been a fellow of a college at Cambridge, and had taken a living, and married late in life. The living was far away in Dorsetshire, and the son, at the time of these visits, was being educated at a private school. Twice they had both been at Folking together, and the uncle had, in his

silent way, liked the boy. The lad had preferred, or had pretended to prefer, books to rats; had understood, or seemed to understand, something of the advantages of cheap food for the people, and had been commended by the father for general good conduct. But when they had last taken their departure from Folking, no one had entertained any idea of any peculiar relations between the nephew and the uncle. It was not till a year or two more had run by, that Mr. Daniel Caldigate thought of making his nephew George the heir to the property.

The property, indeed, was entailed upon John, as it had been entailed upon John's father. There were many institutions of his country which Mr. Caldigate hated with almost an inhuman hatred; but there were none more odious to him than that of entails, which institution he was wont to prove by many arguments to be the source of all the ignorance and all the poverty and all the troubles by which his country was afflicted. He had got his own property by an entail, and certainly never would have had an acre had his father been able to consume more than a life-interest. But he had denied that the property had done him any good, and was loud in declaring that the entail had done the property and those who lived on it very much harm. In his heart of hearts he did feel a desire that when he was gone the acres should still belong to a Caldigate. There was so much in him of the leaven of the old English squiarchic aristocracy as to create a pride in the fact that the Caldigates had been at Folking for three hundred years, and a wish that they might remain there; and no doubt he knew that without repeated entails they would not have remained there. But still he hated the thing, and as years rolled

on he came to think that the entail now existing would do an especial evil.

His son, on leaving school, spent almost the whole four months between that time and the beginning of his first term at Cambridge with the Babingtons. This period included the month of September, and afforded therefore much partridge shooting,—than which nothing was meaner in the opinion of the Squire of Folking. When a short visit was made to Folking, the father was sarcastic and disagreeable; and then, for the first time, John Caldigate showed himself to be possessed of a power of reply which was peculiarly disagreeable to the old man. This had the effect of cutting down the intended allowance of £250 to £220 per annum, for which sum the father had been told that his son could live like a gentleman at the University. This parsimony so disgusted uncle Babington, who lived on the other side of the county, within the borders of Suffolk, that he insisted on giving his nephew a hunter, and undertaking to bear the expense of the animal so long as John should remain at the University. No arrangement could have been more foolish. And that last visit made by John to Babington House for the two days previous to his Cambridge career was in itself most indiscreet. The angry father would not take upon himself to forbid it, but was worked up by it to perilous jealousy. He did not scruple to declare aloud that old Humphrey Babington was a thick-headed fool; nor did Humphrey Babington, who, with his ten or twelve thousand a year, was considerably involved, scruple to say that he hated such cheese-paring ways. John Caldigate felt more distaste to the cheese-paring ways than he did to his uncle's want of literature.

Such was the beginning of the rupture which took place before the time had come for John to take his degree. When that time came he had a couple of hunters at Cambridge, played in the Cambridge eleven, and rowed in one of the Trinity boats. He also owed something over £800 to the regular tradesmen of the University, and a good deal more to other creditors who were not "regular." During the whole of this time his visits to Folking had been short and few. The old squire had become more and more angry, and not the less so because he was sensible of a non-performance of duty on his own part. Though he was close to Cambridge he never went to see his son; nor would he even press the lad to come out to Folking. Nor when, on rare occasions, a visit was made, did he endeavour to make the house pleasant. He was jealous, jealous to hot anger, at being neglected, but could not bring himself to make advances to his own son. Then when he heard from his son's tutor that his son could not pass his degree without the payment of £800 for recognised debts,—then his anger boiled over, and he told John Caldigate that he was expelled from his father's heart and his father's house.

The money was paid and the degree was taken: and there arose the question as to what was to be done. John, of course, took himself to Babington House, and was consoled with by his uncle and cousins. His troubles at this time were numerous enough. That £800 by no means summed up his whole indebtedness;—covered indeed but a small part of it. He had been at Newmarket; and there was a pleasant gentleman, named Davis, who frequented that place and Cambridge, who had been very civil to him when he lost a little money, and who now held his acceptances for,

alas! much more than £800. Even uncle Babington knew nothing of this when the degree was taken. And then there came a terrible blow to him. Aunt Babington,—aunt Polly, as she was called,—got him into her own closet upstairs, where she kept her linen and her jams and favourite liqueurs, and told him that his cousin Julia was dying in love for him. After all that had passed, of course it was expected he would engage himself to his cousin Julia. Now, Julia was the eldest, the thickest-ankled, and the cherry-cheekedest of the lot. To him up to that time the Babington folk had always been a unit. No one else had been so good-natured to him, had so petted him, and so freely administered to all his wants. He would kiss them all round whenever he went to Babington; but he had not kissed Julia more than her sisters. There were three sons, whom he never specially liked, and who certainly were fools. One was the heir, and, of course, did nothing; the second was struggling for a degree at Oxford with an eye to the family living; the third was in a fair way to become the family gamekeeper. He certainly did not wish to marry into the family;—and yet they had all been so kind to him!

“I should have nothing to marry on, aunt Polly,” he said.

Then he was reminded that he was his father's heir, and that his father's house was sadly in want of a mistress. They could live at Babington till Folking should be ready. The prospect was awful!

What is a young man to say in such a position? “I do not love the young lady after that fashion, and, therefore, I must decline.” It requires a hero, and a cold-blooded hero, to do that. And aunt Polly was very much in earnest, for she brought Julia into the

room, and absolutely delivered her up into the young man's arms.

"I am so much in debt," he said, "that I don't care to think of it."

Aunt Polly declared that such debts did not signify in the least. Folking was not embarrassed. Folking did not owe a shilling. Everyone knew that. And there was Julia in his arms! He never said that he would marry her; but when he left the linen-closet the two ladies understood that the thing was arranged.

Luckily for him aunt Polly had postponed this scene till the moment before his departure from the house. He was at this time going to Cambridge, where he was to be the guest, for one night, of a certain Mr. Bolton, who was one of the very few friends to whom his father was still attached. Mr. Bolton was a banker, living close to Cambridge, an old man now, with four sons and one daughter; and to his house John Caldigate was going in order that he might there discuss with Mr. Bolton certain propositions which had been made between him and his father respecting the Folking property. The father had now realised the idea of buying his son out; and John, himself, who had all the world and all his life before him, and was terribly conscious of the obligations which he owed to his friend Davis, had got into his head a notion that he would prefer to face his fortune with a sum of ready money, than to wait in absolute poverty for the reversion of the family estate. He had his own ideas, and in furtherance of them he had made certain inquiries. There was gold being found at this moment among the mountains of New South Wales, in quantities which captivated his imagination. And this was being done in a most lovely spot, among circumstances

which were in all respects romantic. His friend, Richard Shand, who was also a Trinity man, was quite resolved to go out, and he was minded to accompany his friend. In this way, and, as he thought, in this way only, could a final settlement be made with that most assiduous of attendants, Mr. Davis. His mind was fully set upon New South Wales, and his little interview with his cousin Julia did not tend to bind him more closely to his own country, or to Babington, or to Folking.

CHAPTER II

PURITAN GRANGE

PERHAPS there had been a little treachery on the part of Mr. Davis, for he had, in a gently insinuating way, made known to the Squire the fact of those acceptances, and the additional fact that he was, through unforeseen circumstances, lamentably in want of ready money. The Squire became eloquent, and assured Mr. Davis that he would not pay a penny to save either Mr. Davis or his son from instant imprisonment,—or even from absolute starvation. Then Mr. Davis shrugged his shoulders, and whispered the word, "Post-obits." The Squire, thereupon, threatened to kick him out of the house, and, on the next day, paid a visit to his friend, Mr. Bolton. There had, after that, been a long correspondence between the father, the son, and Mr. Bolton, as to which John Caldigate said not a word to the Babingtons. Had he been more communicative, he might have, perhaps, saved himself from that scene in the linen-closet. As it was, when he started for Cambridge, nothing was known at Babington either of Mr. Davis or of the New South Wales scheme.

Mr. Bolton lived in a large, red-brick house, in the village of Chesterton, near to Cambridge, which, with a large garden, was surrounded by an old, high, dark-coloured brick wall. He rarely saw any company; and there were probably not many of the more recently

imported inhabitants of the town who had ever been inside the elaborate iron gates by which the place was to be approached. He had been a banker all his life, and was still reported to be the senior partner in Bolton's bank. But the management of the concern had, in truth, been given up to his two elder sons. His third son was a barrister in London, and a fourth was settled in Cambridge as a solicitor. These men were all married, and were doing well in the world, living in houses better than their father's, and spending a great deal more money. Mr. Bolton had the name of being a hard man, because, having begun life in small circumstances, he had never learned to chuck his shillings about easily; but he had, in a most liberal manner, made over the bulk of his fortune to his sons; and though he himself could rarely be got to sit at their tables, he took delight in hearing that they lived bounteously with their friends. He had been twice married, and there now lived with him his second wife and a daughter, Hester,—a girl about sixteen years of age, at the period of John Caldigate's visit to Puritan Grange, as Mr. Bolton's house was called. At this time Puritan Grange was not badly named; for Mrs. Bolton was a lady of stern life, and Hester Bolton was brought up with more of seclusion and religious observances than are now common in our houses.

Mr. Bolton was probably ten years older than the Squire of Folking; but circumstances had, in early life, made them fast friends. The old Squire had owed a large sum of money to the bank, and Mr. Bolton had then been attracted by the manner in which the son had set himself to work, so that he might not be a burden on the estate. They had been fast friends for a quarter of a century, and now the arrangement of

terms between the present Squire and his son had been left to Mr. Bolton.

Mr. Bolton had, no doubt, received a very unfavourable account of the young man. Men, such as was Mr. Bolton, who make their money by lending it out at recognised rates of interest,—and who are generally very keen in looking after their principal,—have no mercy whatsoever for the Davises of creation, and very little for their customers. To have had dealings with a Davis is condemnation in their eyes. Mr. Bolton would not, therefore, have opened his gates to this spendthrift had not his feelings for the father been very strong. He had thought much upon the matter, and had tried hard to dissuade the Squire. He, the banker, was not particularly attached to the theory of primogeniture. He had divided his wealth equally between his own sons. But he had a strong idea as to property and its rights. The young man's claim to Folking after his father's death was as valid as the father's claim during his life. No doubt, the severance of the entail, if made at all, would be made in accordance with the young man's wishes, and on certain terms which should be declared to be just by persons able to compute the value of such rights. No doubt, also,—so Mr. Bolton thought,—the property would be utterly squandered if left in its present condition. It would be ruined by incumbrances in the shape of post-obits. All this had been deeply considered, and at last Mr. Bolton had consented to act between the father and the son.

When John Caldigate was driven up through the iron gates to Mr. Bolton's door, his mind was not quite at ease within him. He had seen Mr. Bolton on two or three occasions during his University career, and had

called at the house; but he had never entered it, and had never seen the ladies; and now it was necessary that he should discuss his own follies, and own all his faults. Of course, that which he was going to do would, in the eyes of the British world, be considered very unwise. The British world regards the position of heirship to acres as the most desirable which a young man could hold. That he was about to abandon. But, as he told himself, without abandoning it he could not rid himself from the horror of Davis. He was quite prepared to acknowledge his own vice and childish stupidity in regard to Davis. He had looked all round that now, and was sure that he would do nothing of the kind again. But how could he get rid of Davis in any other way than this? And then Folking had no charms for him. He hated Folking. He was certain that any life would suit him better than a life to be passed as squire of Folking. And he was quite alive to the fact that, though there was at home the prospect of future position and future income, for the present there would be nothing. Were he to submit himself humbly to his father, he might probably be allowed to vegetate at the old family home. But there was no career for him. No profession had as yet been even proposed. His father was fifty-five, a very healthy man,—likely to live for the next twenty years. And then it would be impossible that he should dwell in peace under the same roof with his father. And Davis! Life would be miserable to him if he could not free himself from that thralldom. The sum of money which was to be offered to him, and which was to be raised on the Folking property, would enable him to pay Davis, and to start upon his career with plentiful means in his pocket. He would, too, be wise, and not risk all

his capital. Shand had a couple of thousand pounds, and he would start with a like sum of his own. Should he fail in New South Wales, there would still be something on which to begin again. With his mind thus fixed, he entered Mr. Bolton's gates.

He was to stay one night at Puritan Grange; and then, if the matter were arranged, he would go over to Folking for a day or two, and endeavour to part from his father on friendly terms. In that case he would be able to pay Davis himself, and there need be no ground for quarrelling on that score.

Before dinner the matter was settled at the Grange. The stern old man bade his visitor sit down, and then explained to him at full length that which it was proposed to do. So much money the Squire had himself put by; so much more Mr. Bolton himself would advance; the value had been properly computed; and, should the arrangement be completed, he, John Caldigate, would sell his inheritance at its proper price. Over and over again the young man endeavoured to interrupt the speaker, but was told to postpone his words till the other should have done. Such interruptions came from the too evident fact that Mr. Bolton thoroughly despised his guest. Caldigate, though he had been very foolish, though he had loved to slaughter rats and rabbits, and to romp with the girls at Babington, was by no means a fool. He was possessed of good natural abilities, of great activity, and of a high spirit. His appreciation was quicker than that of the old banker, who, as he soon saw, had altogether failed to understand him. In every word that the banker spoke, it was evident that he thought that these thousands would be squandered instantly. The banker spoke as though this terrible severance was to be made

because the natural heir had shown himself to be irrevocably bad. What could be expected from a youth who was deep in the books of a Davis before he had left his college? "I do not recommend this," he said at last. "I have never recommended it. The disruption is so great as to be awful. But when your father has asked what better step he could take, I have been unable to advise him." It was as though the old man were telling the young one that he was too bad for hope, and that, therefore, he must be consigned for ever to perdition.

Caldigate, conscious of the mistake which the banker was making, full of hope as to himself, intending to acknowledge the follies of which he had been guilty, and, at the same time, not to promise,—for he would not condescend so far,—but to profess that they were things of the past, and impatient of the judgment expressed against him, endeavoured to stop the old man in his severity, so that the tone in which the business was being done might be altered. But when he found that he could not do this without offence, he leaned back in his chair, and heard the indictment to the end. "Now, Mr. Bolton," he said, when at length his time came, "you shall hear my view of the matter." And Mr. Bolton did hear him, listening very patiently. Caldigate first asserted, that in coming there to Puritan Grange, his object had been to learn what were the terms proposed—as to which he was now willing to give his assent. He had already quite made up his mind to sell what property he had on the estate, and therefore, though he was much indebted to Mr. Bolton for his disinterested and kind friendship, he was hardly in want of counsel on that matter. Mr. Bolton raised his eyebrows, but still listened patiently. Caldigate

then went on to explain his views as to life, declaring that under no circumstances,—had there been no Davis,—would he have consented to remain at Folking as a deputy-squire, waiting to take up his position some twenty years hence at his father's death. Nor, even were Folking his own at this moment, would he live there. He must do something; and, upon the whole, he thought that gold-mining in the colonies was the most congenial pursuit to which he could put his hand. Then he made a frank acknowledgment as to Davis and his gambling follies, and ended by saying that the matter might be regarded as settled.

He had certainly been successful in changing the old man's opinion. Mr. Bolton did not say as much, nor was he a man likely to make such acknowledgment; but when he led John Caldigate away to be introduced to his wife in the drawing-room, he felt less of disdain for his guest than he had done half an hour before. Mr. Bolton was a silent, cautious man, even in his own family, and had said nothing of this business to his wife, and nothing, of course, to his daughter. Mrs. Bolton asked after the Squire, and expressed a hope that her guest would not find the house very dull for one night. She had heard that John Caldigate was a fast young man, and of course regarded him as a lost sinner. Hester, who was with her mother, looked at him with all her young, big eyes, but did not speak a word. It was very seldom that she saw any young man, or indeed young people of either sex. But when this stranger spoke freely to her mother about this subject and the other, she listened to him and was interested.

John Caldigate, without being absolutely handsome, was a youth sure to find favour in a woman's eyes.

He was about five feet ten in height, strong and very active, with bright, dark eyes which were full of life and intelligence. His forehead was square and showed the angles of his brow; his hair was dark and thick, and cut somewhat short; his mouth was large, but full of expression and generally, also, of good-humour. His nose would have been well formed, but that it was a little snubbed at the end. Altogether his face gave you the idea of will, intellect, and a kindly nature; but there was in it a promise, too, of occasional anger, and a physiognomist might, perhaps, have expected from it that vacillation in conduct which had hitherto led him from better things into wretched faults.

As he was talking to Mrs. Bolton he had observed the girl, who sat apart, with her fingers busy on her work, and who had hardly spoken a word since his entrance. She was, he thought, the most lovely human being that he had ever beheld; and yet she was hardly more than a child. But how different from those girls at Babington! Her bright brown hair was simply brushed from off her forehead and tied in a knot behind her head. Her dress was as plain as a child's,—as though it was intended that she should still be regarded as a child. Her face was very fair, with large, grey, thoughtful eyes, and a mouth which, though as Caldigate watched her it was never opened, seemed always as if it was just about to pour forth words. And he could see that though her eyes were intent upon her work, from time to time she looked across at him; and he thought that if only they two were alone together, he could teach her to speak.

But no such opportunity was given to him now, or during his short sojourn at the Grange. After a while the old man returned to the room and took him up to

his bed-chamber. It was then about half-past four, and he was told that they were to dine at six. It was early in November,—not cold enough for bedroom fires among thrifty people, and there he was left, apparently to spend an hour with nothing to do. Rebelling against this, declaring that even at Puritan Grange he would be master of his own actions, he rushed down into the hall, took his hat, and walked off into the town. He would go and take one last look at the old college.

He went in through the great gate and across the yard, and passing by the well-known buttery hatches, looked into the old hall for the last time. The men were all seated at dinner, and he could see the fellows up at the high table. Three years ago it had been his fixed resolve to earn for himself the right to sit upon that dais. He had then been sure of himself,—that he would do well, and take honours, and win a fellowship. There had been moments in which he had thought that a college life would suit him till he came into his own property. But how had all that faded away! Everybody had congratulated him on the ease with which he did his work,—and the result had been Newmarket, Davis, and a long score in the ephemeral records of a cricket match. As he stood there, with his slouched hat over his eyes, one of the college servants recognised him, and called him by his name. Then he passed on quickly, and made his way out to the gravel-walk by the river-side. It was not yet closed for the night, and he went on, that he might take one last turn up and down the old avenue.

He had certainly made a failure of his life so far. He did acknowledge to himself that there was something nobler in these classic shades than in the ore-

laden dirt of an Australian gold gully. He knew as much of the world as that. He had not hitherto chosen the better part, and now something of regret, even as to Folking,—poor old Folking,—came upon him. He was, as it were, being kicked out and repudiated by his own family as worthless. And what was he to do about Julia Babington? After that scene in the linen-closet, he could not leave his country without a word either to Julia or to aunt Polly. But the idea of Julia was doubly distasteful to him since that lovely vision of young female simplicity had shone upon him from the corner of Mrs. Bolton's drawing-room. Romping with the Babington girls was all very well; but if he could only feel the tips of that girl's fingers come within the grasp of his hand! Then he thought that it would lend a fine romance to his life if he could resolve to come back, when he should be laden with gold, and make Hester Bolton his wife. It should be his romance, and he swore that he would cling to it.

He turned back, and came down to dinner five minutes after the time. At ten minutes before dinner-time Mr. Bolton heard that he was gone out and was offended,—thinking it quite possible that he would not return at all. What might not be expected from a young man who could so easily abandon his inheritance! But he was there, only five minutes after the time, and the dinner was eaten almost in silence. In the evening there was tea, and the coldest shivering attempt at conversation for half an hour, during which he could still at moments catch the glance of Hester's eyes, and see the moving curve of her lips. Then there was a reading of the Bible, and prayer, and before ten he was in his bedroom.

On the next morning as he took his departure, Mr.

Bolton said a word intended to be gracious. "I hope you may succeed in your enterprise, Mr. Caldigate."

"Why should I not as well as another?" said John, cheerily.

"If you are steady, sober, industrious, self-denying, and honest, you probably will," replied the banker.

"To promise all that would be to promise too much," said John. "But I mean to make an effort." Then at that moment he made one effort which was successful. For an instant he held Hester's fingers within his hand.

CHAPTER III

DANIEL CALDIGATE

THAT piece of business was done. It was one of the disagreeable things which he had to do before he could get away to the gold-diggings, and it was done. Now he had to say farewell to his father, and that would be a harder task. As the moment was coming in which he must bid adieu to his father, perhaps for ever, and bid adieu to the old place which, though he despised it, he still loved, his heart was heavy within him. He felt sure that his father had no special regard for him;—in which he was, of course, altogether wrong, and the old man was equally wrong in supposing that his son was unnaturally deficient in filial affection. But they had never known each other, and were so different that neither had understood the other. The son, however, was ready to confess to himself that the chief fault had been with himself. It was natural, he thought, that a father's regard should be deadened by such conduct as his had been, and natural that an old man should not believe in the quick repentance and improvement of a young one.

He hired a gig and drove himself over from Cambridge to Folking. As he got near to the place, and passed along the dikes, and looked to the right and left down the droves, and trotted at last over the Folking bridge across the Middle Wash, the country did not seem to him to be so unattractive as of yore; and when

he recognised the faces of the neighbours, when one of the tenants spoke to him kindly, and the girls dropped a curtsey as he passed, certain soft regrets began to crop up in his mind. After all, there is a comfort in the feeling of property, not simply its money comfort, but in the stability and reputation of a recognised home. Six months ago there had seemed to him to be something ridiculous in the idea of a permanent connection between the names of Caldigate and Folking. It was absurd that, with so wild and beautiful a world around him, he should be called upon to live in a washy fen because his father and grandfather had been unfortunate enough to do so. And then, at that time, all sympathy with bricks and mortar, any affection for special trees or well-known home-haunts, was absurd in his eyes. And as his father had been harsh to him, and did not like him, would it not be better that they should be far apart? It was thus that he had reasoned. But now all that was changed. An unwonted tenderness had come upon his spirit. The very willows by the brook seemed to appeal to him. As he saw the house chimneys through the trees, he remembered that they had carried smoke from the hearths of many generations of Caldigates. He remembered, too, that his father would soon be old, and would be alone. It seemed to himself that his very mind and spirit were altered.

But all that was too late. He had agreed to the terms proposed; and even were he now to repudiate them, what could he do with Davis, and how could he live for the present? Not for a moment did he entertain such an idea, but he had lost that alacrity of spirit which had been his when he first found the way out of his difficulties.

His father did not come forth to meet him. He went

in across the hall, and through the library, into a little closet beyond, in which Mr. Caldigate was wont to sit. "Well, John," said the old man, "how have you and Mr. Bolton got on together?"

There seemed to be something terribly cold in this. It might be better that they should part,—better, even, though the parting should be for ever. It might be right; nay, he knew that it was right that he should be thrust out of the inheritance. He had spent money that was not his own, and, of course, he must pay the debt. But that his father should sit there in his chair on his entrance, not even rising to greet him, and should refer at once to Mr. Bolton, and that business arrangement, as though that, and that alone, need now be discussed, did seem to him to be almost cruel. Of all that his father had suffered in constraining himself to this conduct, he understood nothing. "Mr. Bolton made himself very plain, sir."

"He would be sure to do so. He is a man of business, and intelligent. But as to the terms proposed, were they what you had expected?"

"Quite as good as I had expected."

"Whether good or bad, of course you will understand that I have had nothing to do with them. The matter has been referred to two gentlemen conversant with such subjects; and, after due inquiry, they told Mr. Bolton what was the money value of your rights. It was a question to be settled as easily as the price of a ton of coals, or a joint of beef. But you must understand that I have not interfered."

"I am quite aware of that, sir."

"As for the money, something over a third of it is in my own hands. I have not been extravagant myself, and have saved so much. The remainder will come out

of Mr. Bolton's bank, and will be lent on mortgage. I certainly shall not have cause for extravagance now, living here alone; and shall endeavour to free the estate from the burden by degrees. When I die, it will, in accordance with my present purpose, go to your cousin George." As this was said, John thought he perceived something like a quiver in his father's voice, which, up to that point, had been hard, clear, and unshaken. "As to that, however, I do not intend to pledge myself," he continued. "The estate will now be my own, subject to the claim from Messrs. Bolton's bank. I don't know that there is anything else to be said."

"Not about business, sir."

"And it is business, I suppose, that has brought you here,—and to Cambridge. I do not know what little things you have of your own in the house."

"Not much, sir."

"If there be anything that you wish to take, take it. But with you now, I suppose, money is the only possession that has any value."

"I should like to have the small portrait of you;—the miniature."

"The miniature of me," said the father, almost scoffingly, looking up at his son's face, suspiciously. And yet, though he would not show it, he was touched. Only if this were a ruse on the part of the young man, a mock sentiment, a little got up theatrical pretence,—then,—then how disgraced he would be in his own estimation at having been moved by such mockery!

The son stood square before his father, disdaining any attempt to evince a supplicating tenderness either by his voice or by his features. "But, perhaps, you have a special value for it," he said.

"No, indeed. It is others, not oneself, that ought to have such trifles,—that is, if they are of value at all."

"There is none but myself that can care much for it."

"There is no one to care at all. No one else, that is," he added, wishing to avoid any further declaration. "Take that or anything else you want in the house. There will be things left, I suppose,—clothes and books and such like."

"Hardly anything, sir. Going so far, I had better give them away. A few books I shall take." Then the conversation was over; and in a few minutes John Caldigate found himself roaming alone about the place.

It was so probable that he might never see it again! Indeed it seemed to him now that were he to return to England with a fortune made, he would hardly come to Folking. Years and years must roll by before that could be done. If he could only come back to Cambridge and fetch that wife away with him, then he thought it would be better for him to live far from England, whether he were rich or whether he were poor. It was quite evident that his father's heart was turned from him altogether. Of course he had himself to blame,—himself only; but still it was strange to him that a father should feel no tenderness at parting with an only son. While he had been in the room he had constrained himself manfully; not a drop of moisture had glittered in his eye; not a tone of feeling had thrilled in his voice; his features had never failed him. There had always been that look of audacity on his brow joined to a certain manliness of good-humour in his mouth, as though he had been thoroughly master of himself and the situation. But now, as he pushed

his hat from off his forehead, he rubbed his hand across his eyes to dash away the tears. He felt almost inclined to rush back to the house and fall on his knees before his father, and kiss the old man's hands, and beg the old man's blessing. But though he was potent for much he was not potent for that. Such expression of tenderness would have been true; but he knew that he would so break down in the attempt as to make it seem to be false.

He got out upon Twopenny Drove and passed over the ferry, meaning to walk across the farm and so out on to the Causeway, and round home by the bridge. But on the other side of the Wash he encountered Mr. Ralph Holt, the occupier of Twopenny farm, whose father also and grandfather had lived upon the same acres. "And so thou be'est going away from us, Mr. John," said the farmer, with real tenderness, almost with solemnity, in his voice, although there was at the same time something ridiculous in the far-fetched sadness of his tone and gait.

"Yes, indeed, Holt, I want to travel and see the world at a distance from here."

"If it was no more than that, Mr. John, there would be nothing about it. Zeeing the world! You young collegers allays does that. But be'est thou to come back and be Squire o' Folking?"

"I think not, Holt, I think not. My father, I hope, will be Squire for many a year."

"Like enough. And we all hope that, for there aren't nowhere a juster man nor the Squire, and he's hale and hearty. But in course of things his time'll run out. And it be so, Mr. John, that thou be'est going for ever and allays?"

"I rather think I am."

“It’s wrong, Mr. John. Though maybe I’m making over free to talk of what don’t concern me. Yet I say it’s wrong. Sons should come arter fathers, specially where there’s land. We don’t none of us like it;—none of us! It’s worse nor going, any one of ourselves. For what’s a lease? But when a man has a freehold he should stick to it for ever and aye. It’s just as though the old place was a’ tumbling about all our ears.” Caldigate was good-natured with the man, trying to make him understand that everything was being done for the best. And at last he bade him good-bye affectionately, shaking hands with him, and going into the farm-house to perform the same ceremony with his wife and daughters. But to the last Ralph Holt was uncomfortable and dismal, foretelling miseries. It was clear that, to his thinking, the stability of this world was undermined and destroyed by the very contemplation of such a proceeding as this.

Caldigate pursued his walk, and in the course of it bade farewell to more than one old friend. None of them were so expressive as Holt, but he could perceive that he was regarded by all of them as a person who, by his conduct, was bringing misfortune, not only on himself, but on the whole parishes of Utterden and Netherden.

At dinner the Squire conversed upon various subjects, if not easily to himself, at least with affected ease. Had he applied himself to subjects altogether indifferent,—to the state of politics, or the Game Laws, or the absurdities of a State Church, the unfitness of such matters for the occasion would have been too apparent. Both he and his son would have broken down in the attempt. But he could talk about Babington,—abusing the old family,—and even about himself, and about

New South Wales, and gold, and the coming voyage, without touching points which had been, and would be, specially painful. Not a word had ever been spoken between them as to Davis. There had, of course, been letters, very angry letters; but the usurer's name had never been mentioned. Nor was there any need that it should be mentioned now. It was John's affair,—not in any way his. So he asked and listened to much about Richard Shand, and the mode of gold finding among the diggings in New South Wales.

When the old butler had gone he was even more free, speaking of things that were past, not only without anger, but, as far as possible, without chagrin,—treating his son as a person altogether free from any control of his. "I dare say it is all for the best," he said.

"It is well at any rate to try to think so, sir," replied John, conscience-stricken as to his own faults.

"I doubt whether there would have been anything for you to do here,—or at least anything that you would have done. You would have had too much ambition to manage this little estate under me, and not enough of industry, I fear, to carry you to the front in any of the professions. I used to think of the bar."

"And so did I."

"But when I found that the Babingtons had got hold of you, and that you liked horses and guns, better than words and arguments——"

"I never did, sir."

"It seemed so."

"Of course I have been weak."

"Do not suppose for a moment that I am finding fault. It would be of no avail, and I would not thus embitter our last hours together. But when I saw how your tastes seemed to lead you, I began to fear that

there could be no career for you here. On such a property as Babington an eldest son may vegetate like his father before him, and may succeed to it in due time, before he has wasted everything, and may die as he has lived, useless, but having to the end all the enjoyments of a swine."

"You are severe upon my cousins, sir."

"I say what I think. But you would not have done that. And though you are not industrious, you are far too active and too clever for such a life. Now you are probably in earnest as to the future."

"Yes, I am certainly in earnest."

"And though you are going to risk your capital in a precarious business, you will only be doing what is done daily by enterprising men. I could wish that your position were more secure;—but that now cannot be helped."

"My bed is as I have made it. I quite understand that, sir."

"Thinking of all this, I have endeavoured to reconcile myself to your going." Then he paused a moment, considering what he should next say. And his son was silent, knowing that something further was to come. "Had you remained in England we could hardly have lived together as father and son should live. You would have been dependent on me, and would have rebelled against that submission which a state of dependence demands. There would have been nothing for you but to have waited,—and almost to have wished, for my death."

"No, sir; never; never that."

"It would have been no more than natural. I shall hear from you sometimes?"

"Certainly, sir."

"It will give an interest to my life if you will write occasionally. Whither do you go to-morrow?"

It had certainly been presumed, though never said, that this last visit to the old home was to be only for one day. The hired gig had been kept; and in his letter the son had asked whether he could be taken in for Thursday night. But now the proposition that he should go so soon seemed to imply a cold-blooded want of feeling on his part. "I need not be in such a hurry, sir," he said.

"Of course, it shall be as you please, but I do not know that you will do any good by staying. A last month may be pleasant enough, or even a last week, but a last day is purgatory. The melancholy of the occasion cannot be shaken off. It is only the prolonged wail of a last farewell." All this was said in the old man's ordinary voice, but it seemed to betoken, if not feeling itself, a recognition of feeling which the son had not expected.

"It is very sad," said the son.

"Therefore, why prolong it? Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once,—seeing that it is necessary that you should go. Will you take any more wine? No? Then let us go into the other room. As they are making company of you and have lighted another fire, we will do as they would have us." Then for the rest of the evening there was some talk about books, and the father, who was greatly given to reading, explained to his son what kind of literature would, as he thought, fit in best with the life of a gold-digger.

After what had passed, Caldigate, of course, took his departure on the following morning. "Good-bye," said the old man, as the son grasped his hand, "Good-

bye." He made no overture to come even as far as the hall in making this his final adieu.

"I trust I may return to see you in health."

"It may be so. As to that we can say nothing. Good-bye." Then, when the son had turned his back, the father recalled him, by a murmur rather than by a word,—but in that moment he had resolved to give way a little to the demands of nature. "Good-bye, my son," he said, in a low voice, very solemnly, "May God bless you and preserve you." Then he turned back at once to his own closet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SHANDS

JOHN CALDIGATE had promised to go direct from Folking to the house of his friend Richard Shand, or rather, to the house in which lived Richard Shand's father and family. The two young men had much to arrange together, and this had been thought to be expedient. When Caldigate, remembering how affairs were at his own home, had suggested that at so sad a moment he might be found to be in the way, Shand had assured him that there would be no sadness at all. "We are not a sentimental race," he had said. "There are a dozen of us, and the sooner some of us disperse ourselves, the more room will there be in the nest for the others."

Shand had been Caldigate's most intimate friend at college through the whole period of their residence, and now he was to be his companion in a still more intimate alliance. And yet, though he liked the man, he did not altogether approve of him. Shand had also got into debt at Cambridge, but had not paid his debts; and had dealings also with Davis, as to which he was now quite indifferent. He had left the University without taking a degree, and had seemed to bear all these adversities with perfect equanimity. There had not been hitherto much of veneration in Caldigate's character, but even he had, on occasions, been almost shocked at the want of respect evinced by his friend for

conventional rules. All college discipline, all college authorities, all university traditions, had been despised by Shand, who even in his dress had departed as far from recognised customs and fashions among the men as from the requisitions of the statutes and the milder requirements of the dignitaries of the day. Now, though he could not pay his debts,—and intended, indeed, to run away from them,—he was going to try his fortune with a certain small capital which his father had agreed to give him as his share of what there might be of the good things of the world among the Shands generally. As Shand himself said of both of them, he was about to go forth as a prodigal son, with a perfect assurance that, should he come back empty-handed, no calf would be killed for him. But he was an active man, with a dash of fun, and perhaps a sprinkling of wit, quick and brave, to whom life was apparently a joke, and who boasted of himself that, though he was very fond of beef and beer, he could live on bread and water, if put to it, without complaining. Caldigate almost feared that the man was a dangerous companion, but still there was a certain fitness about him for the thing contemplated; and, for such a venture, where could he find any other companion who would be fit?

Dr. Shand, the father, was a physician enjoying a considerable amount of provincial eminence in a small town in Essex. Here he had certainly been a successful man; for, with all the weight of such a family on his back, he had managed to save some money. There had been small legacies from other Shands, and trifles of portion had come to them from the Potters, of whom Mrs. Shand had been one,—Shand and Potter having been wholesale druggists in Smithfield. The young Shands had generally lived a pleasant life; had gone to

school,—the eldest son, as we have seen, to the university also,—and had had governesses and ponies to ride, and had been great at dancing, and had shot arrows, and played Badminton, and been subject to but little domestic discipline. They had lived crowded together in a great red brick house, plenteously, roughly, quarrelling continually, but very fond of each other in their own way, and were known throughout that side of the country as a happy family. The girls had always gloves and shoes for dancing, and the boys had enjoyed a considerable amount of shooting and hunting without owning either guns or horses of their own. Now Dick was to go in quest of a fortune, and all the girls were stitching shirts for him, and were as happy as possible. Not a word was said about his debts, and no one threw it in his teeth that he had failed to take a degré. It was known of the Shands that they always made the best of everything.

When Caldigate got out of the railway carriage at Pollington, he was still melancholy with the remembrance of all that he had done and all that he had lost, and he expected to find something of the same feeling at his friend's house. But before he had been there an hour he was laughing with the girls as though such an enterprise as theirs was the best joke in the world. And when a day and a night had passed, Mrs. Shand was deep among his shirts and socks, and had already given him much advice about flannel and soft soap. "I know Maria would like to go out with you," said the youngest daughter on the third day, a girl of twelve years old, who ought to have known better, and who, nevertheless, knew more than she ought to have done.

"Indeed Maria would like nothing of the kind," said the young lady in question.

“Only, Mr. Caldigate, of course you would have to marry her.” Then the child was cuffed, and Maria declared that the proposed arrangement would suit neither her nor Mr. Caldigate in the least. The eldest daughter, Harriet, was engaged to marry a young clergyman in the neighbourhood, which event, however, was to be postponed till he had got a living; and the second, Matilda, was under a cloud because she would persist in being in love with Lieutenant Postlethwaite, of the Dragoons, whose regiment was quartered in the town. Maria was the third. All these family secrets were told to him quite openly as well as the fact that Josh, the third son, was to become a farmer because he could not be got to learn the multiplication table.

Between Pollington and London Caldigate remained for six weeks, during which time he fitted himself out, took his passage, and executed the necessary deeds as to the estate. It might have been pleasant enough,—this little interval before his voyage,—as the Shands, though rough and coarse, were kind to him and good-humoured, had it not been that a great trouble befel him through over conscientiousness as to a certain matter. After what had passed at Babington House, it was expedient that he should, before he started for New South Wales, give some notice to his relatives there, so that Julia might know that destiny did not intend her to become Mrs. Caldigate of Folking. Aunt Polly had, no doubt, been too forward in that matter, and in wishing to dispose of her daughter had put herself in the way of merited rebuke and disappointment. It was, however, not the less necessary that she should be told of the altered circumstances of her wished-for son-in-law. But, had he been wise, he would so have written his letter that no answer should reach him before he had

left the shores of England. His conscience, however, pinched him, and before he had even settled the day on which he would start, he wrote to his aunt a long letter in which he told her everything,—how he had disposed of his inheritance,—how he had become so indebted to Davis as to have to seek a new fortune out of England,—how he had bade farewell to Folking for ever,—and how impossible it was under all these circumstances that he should aspire to the hand of his cousin Julia.

It was as though a thunderbolt had fallen among them at Babington. Mr. Babington himself was certainly not a clever man, but he knew enough of his own position, as an owner of acres, to be very proud of it, and he was affectionate enough towards his nephew to feel the full weight of this terrible disruption. It seemed to him that his brother-in-law, Daniel Caldigate, was doing a very wicked thing, and he hurried across the country, to Folking, that he might say so. "You have not sense enough to understand the matter," said Daniel Caldigate. "You have no heart in your bowels if you can disinherit an only son," said the big squire. "Never mind where I carry my heart," said the smaller squire; "but it is a pity you should carry so small an amount of brain." No good could be done by such a meeting as that, nor by the journey which aunt Polly took to Pollington. The Caldigates, both father and son, were gifted with too strong a will to be turned from their purpose by such interference. But a great deal of confusion was occasioned; and aunt Polly among the Shands was regarded as a very wonderful woman indeed. "Oh, my son, my darling son," she said, weeping on John Caldigate's shoulder. Now John Caldigate was certainly not her son, in the usual acceptation of the word, nor did Maria Shand be-

lieve that he was so even in that limited sense in which a daughter's husband may be so designated. It was altogether very disagreeable, and made our hero almost resolve to get on board the ship a week before it started from the Thames instead of going down to Plymouth and catching it at the last moment. Of course it would have been necessary that the Babingtons should know all about it sooner or later, but John very much regretted that he had not delayed his letter till the day before his departure.

There is something jovial when you are young in preparing for a long voyage and for totally altered circumstances in life, especially when the surroundings are in themselves not melancholy. A mother weeping over a banished child may be sad enough,—going as an exile when there is no hope of a return. But here among the Shands, with whom sons and daughters were plentiful, and with whom the feelings were of a useful kind, and likely to wear well, rather than of a romantic nature, the bustle, the purchasings, the arrangements, and the packings generally had in them a pleasantness of activity with no disagreeable accompaniments.

“I do hope you will wear them, Dick,” the mother said with something like a sob in her voice; but the tenderness came not from the approaching departure, but from her fear that the thick woollen drawers on which she was re-sewing all the buttons, should be neglected,—after Dick's usual fashion. “Mr. Caldgate, I hope you will see that he wears them. He looks strong, but indeed he is not.” Our hero, who had always regarded his friend as a bull for strength of constitution generally, promised that he would be attentive to Dick's drawers.

“You may be sure that I shall wear them,” said

Dick; "but the time will come when I shall probably wear nothing else, so you had better make the buttons firm."

Everything was to be done with strict economy, but yet there was plenty of money for purchases. There always is at such occasions. The quantity of clothes got together seemed to be more than any two men could ever wear; and among it all there were no dress coats and no dress trousers; or, if either of them had such articles, they were smuggled. The two young men were going out as miners, and took a delight in preparing themselves to be rough. Caldigate was at first somewhat modest in submitting his own belongings to the females of the establishment; but that feeling soon wore off, and the markings and mendings, and buttonings and hemmings went on in a strictly impartial manner as though he himself were a chick out of the same brood.

"What will you do?" said the doctor, "if you spend your capital and make nothing?"

"Work for wages," said Dick. "We shall have got, at any rate, enough experience out of our money to be able to do that. Men are getting 10s. a day."

"But you'd have to go on doing that always," said the mother.

"Not at all. Of course it's a life of ups and downs. A man working for wages can put half what he earns into a claim, so that when a thing does come up trumps at last, he will have his chance. I have read a good deal about it now. There is plenty to be got if a man only knows how to keep it."

"Drinking is the worst," said the doctor.

"I think I can trust myself for that," said Dick, whose hand at the moment was on a bottle of whisky,

and who had been by no means averse to jollifications at Cambridge. "A miner when he's at work should never drink."

"Nor when he's not at work, if he wants to keep what he earns."

"I'm not going to take the pledge, or anything of that kind," continued the son, "but I think I know enough of it all, not to fall into that pit." During this discussion, Caldigate sat silent, for he had already had various conversations on this subject with his friend. He had entertained some fears, which were not, perhaps, quite removed by Dick's manly assurances.

A cabin had been taken for the joint use of the young men on board the *Goldfinder*, a large steamer which was running at the time from London to Melbourne, doing the voyage generally in about two months. But they were going as second-class passengers and their accommodation therefore was limited. Dick had insisted on this economy, which was hardly necessary to Caldigate, and which was not absolutely pressed upon the other. But Dick had insisted. "Let us begin as we mean to go on," he had said; "of course we've got to rough it. We shall come across something a good deal harder than second-class fare before we have made our fortunes, and worked probably with mates more uncouth than second-class passengers." It was impossible to oppose counsel such as this, and therefore second-class tickets were taken on board the *Goldfinder*.

A terrible struggle was made during the last fortnight to prevent the going of John Caldigate. Mr. Babington was so shocked that he did not cease to stir himself. Allow a son to disinherit himself, merely because he had fallen into the hands of a money-lending Jew before he had left college! To have the whole

condition of a property changed by such a simple accident! It was shocking to him; and he moved himself in the matter with much more energy than old Mr. Caldigate had expected from him. He wrote heart-rending letters to Folking, in spite of the hard words which had been said to him there. He made a second journey to Cambridge, and endeavoured to frighten Mr. Bolton. Descent of acres from father to son was to him so holy a thing, that he was roused to unexpected energies. He was so far successful that Mr. Daniel Caldigate did write a long letter to his son, in which he offered to annul the whole proceeding. "Your uncle accuses me of injustice," he said. "I have not been unjust. But there is no reason whatever why the arrangement should stand. Even if the money had been paid to Davis I will bear that loss rather than you should think that I have taken advantage of you in your troubles." But John Caldigate was too firm and too determined for such retrogression. The money had been paid to Davis, and other monies had been used in other directions. He was quite contented with the bargain, and would certainly adhere to it.

Then came the last night before their departure; the evening before the day on which they were to go from Pollington to London, and from London to Plymouth. All the heavy packages, and all the clothes had, of course, been put on board the Goldfinder in the London docks. The pleasant task of preparation was at an end, and they were now to go forth upon their hard labours. Caldigate had become so intimate with the family, that it seemed as though a new life had sprung up for him, and that as he had parted from all that he then had of a family at Folking, he was now to break away from new ties under the doctor's roof. They had

dined early, and at ten o'clock there was what Mrs. Shand called a little bit of supper. They were all of them high in heart, and very happy,—testifying their affection to the departing ones by helping them to the nicest bits, and by filling their tumblers the fullest. How it happened, no one could have said, but it did happen that, before the evening was over, Maria and Caldigate were together in a little room behind the front parlour. What still remained of their luggage was collected there, and this last visit had probably been made in order that the packages might be once more counted.

“It does seem so odd that you should be going,” she said.

“It is so odd to me that I should ever have come.”

“We had always heard of you since Dick went to Cambridge.”

“I knew that there were so many of you, and that was all. Brothers never talk of their sisters, I suppose. But I seem to know you now so well! You have been so kind to me!”

“Because you are Dick’s friend.”

“I didn’t suppose that it was anything else.”

“That’s not nice of you, Mr. Caldigate. You know that we are all very fond of you. We shall be so anxious to hear. You will be good to him, won’t you?”

“And he to me, I hope.”

“I think you are steadier than he is, and can do more for him than he can for you. I wonder, shall we ever see each other again, Mr. Caldigate?”

“Why not?”

“New South Wales is so far, and you will both marry there, and then you will not want to come back. I hope I may live to see dear Dick again some day.”

“But only Dick?”

"And you too, if you would care about it."

"Of course I should care about it," he said. And as he said so, of course he put his arm round her waist and kissed her. It did not mean much. She did not think it meant much. But it gave a little colouring of romance to that special moment of her life. He, when he went up to his bed, declared to himself that it meant nothing at all. He still had those large eyes clear before him, and was still fixed in his resolution to come back for them when some undefined point of his life should have passed by.

"Now," said Dick Shand, as they were seated together in a third-class railway carriage on the following morning, "now I feel that I am beginning life."

"With proper resolutions, I hope, as to honesty, sobriety, and industry."

"With a fixed determination to make a fortune, and come back, and be *facile princeps* among all the Shands. I have already made up my mind as to the sum I will give each of the girls, and the way I will start the two younger boys in business. In the meantime let us light a pipe."

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDFINDER

THERE is no peculiar life more thoroughly apart from life in general, more unlike our usual life, more completely a life of itself, governed by its own rules and having its own roughnesses and amenities, than life on board ship. What tender friendship it produces, and what bitter enmities! How completely the society has formed itself into separate sets after the three or four first days! How thoroughly it is acknowledged that this is the aristocratic set, and that the plebeian! How determined are the aristocrats to admit no intrusion, and how anxious are the plebeians to intrude! Then there arises the demagogue, who heads a party, having probably been disappointed in early life,—that is, in his first endeavours on board the ship. And the women have to acknowledge all their weaknesses, and to exercise all their strength. It is a bad time for them on board ship if they cannot secure the attention of the men,—as it is in the other world; but in order that they may secure it, they assume indifference. They assume indifference, but are hard at work with their usual weapons. The men can do very well by themselves. For them there is drinking, smoking, cards, and various games; but the potency of female spells soon works upon them, and all who are worth anything are more or less in love by the end of the first week. Of course it must all come to an end when the port is reached.

That is understood, though there may sometimes be mistakes. Most pathetic secrets are told with the consciousness that they will be forgotten as soon as the ship is left. And there is the whole day for these occupations. No work is required from anyone. The lawyer does not go to his court, nor the merchant to his desk. Pater-familias receives no bills; mater-familias orders no dinners. The daughter has no household linen to disturb her. The son is never recalled to his books. There is no parliament, no municipality, no vestry. There are neither rates nor taxes nor rents to be paid. The government is the softest despotism under which subjects were ever allowed to do almost just as they please. That the captain has a power is known, but hardly felt. He smiles on all, is responsible for everything, really rules the world submitted to him, from the setting of the sails down to the frying of the chops, and makes one fancy that there must be something wrong with men on shore because first-class nations cannot be governed like first-class ships.

The Goldfinder had on board her over a hundred first-class passengers, and nearly as many of the second class. The life among them was much of the same kind, though in the second class there was less of idleness, less of pleasure, and something more of an attempt to continue the ordinary industry of life. The women worked more and the men read more than their richer neighbours. But the love-making, and the fashion, and the mutiny against the fashion, were the same in one set as in the other. Our friends were at first subjected to an inconvenience which is always felt in such a position. They were known to have had saloon rather than second-cabin antecedents. Everybody had heard that they had been at Cambridge, and

therefore they were at first avoided. And as they themselves were determined not to seek associates among their more aristocratic neighbours, they were left to themselves and solitary for some few days. But this was a condition not at all suited to Dick Shand's temperament, and it was not long before he had made both male and female acquaintances.

"Have you observed that woman in the brown straw hat?" Dick said to Caldigate, one morning, as they were leaning together on the forepart of the vessel against one of the pens in which the fowls were kept. They were both dressed according to the parts they were acting, and which they intended to act, as second-class passengers and future working miners. Anyone knowing in such matters would have seen that they were over dressed; for the real miner, when he is away from his work, puts on his best clothes, and endeavours to look as little rough as possible. And all this had no doubt been seen and felt, and discounted among our friends' fellow-passengers.

"I have seen her every day, of course," said Caldigate, "and have been looking at her for the last half hour."

"She is looking at us now."

"She seems to me to be very attentive to the stocking she is mending."

"Just a woman's wiles. At this moment she can't hear us, but she knows pretty nearly what we are saying by the way our lips are going. Have you spoken to her?"

"I did say a word or two to her yesterday."

"What did she say?"

"I don't recollect especially. She struck me as talking better than her gown, if you know what I mean."

"She talks a great deal better than her gown," said Dick. "I don't quite know what to make of her. She says that she is going out to earn her bread, but when I asked her how, she either couldn't or wouldn't answer me. She is a mystery, and mysteries are always worth unravelling. I shall go to work and unravel her."

At that moment the female of whom they were speaking got up from her seat on one of the spars which was bound upon the deck, folded up her work, and walked away. She was a remarkable woman, and certainly looked to be better than her gown, which was old and common enough. Caldigate had observed her frequently, and had been much struck by the word or two she had spoken to him on the preceding day. "I should like ship life well enough," she had said, in answer to some ordinary question, "if it led to nothing else."

"You would not remain here for ever?"

"Certainly, if I could. There is plenty to eat, and a bed to sleep on, and no one to be afraid of. And though nobody knows me, everybody knows enough of me not to think that I ought to be taken to a police office because I have not gloves to my hands."

"Don't you think it wearisome?" he had asked.

"Everything is wearisome; but here I have a proud feeling of having paid my way. To have settled in advance for your dinner for six weeks to come is a magnificent thing. If I get too tired of it I can throw myself overboard. You can't even do that in London without the police being down upon you. The only horror to me here is that there will so soon be an end to it."

At that time he had not even heard her name, or known whether she were alone or joined to others. Then

he had inquired, and a female fellow-passenger had informed him that she was a Mrs. Smith,—that she had seen better days, but had been married to a ne'er-do-well husband, who had drank himself to death within a year of their marriage, and that she was now going out to the colony, probably,—so the old lady said who was the informant,—in search of a second husband. She was to some extent, the old lady said, in charge of a distant relative, who was then on board, with a respectable husband and children, and who was very much ashamed of her poor connection. So much John Caldigate had heard.

Though he had heard this he did not feel inclined to tell it all to Dick Shand. Dick had professed his intention of unravelling the mystery, but Caldigate almost thought that he would like to unravel it himself. The woman was so constantly alone! And then, though she was ill-dressed, untidy, almost unkempt on occasions, still, through it all, there was something attractive about her. There was a brightness in her eye, and a courage about her mouth which had made him think that, in spite of her appearance, she would be worth his attention—just for the voyage. When he had been speaking to herself they had been on the deck together, and it had been dusk and he had not been able to look her in the face; but while Shand had been speaking to him he had observed that she was very comely. And this was the more remarkable because it seemed to him to be so evident that she made the worst rather than the best of herself. She was quite a young woman;—probably, he thought, not more than three or four and twenty; and she was there, with many young men round her, and yet she made no effort to attract attention. When his eye had fallen upon her she had

generally been quite alone, doing some piece of coarse and ordinary work.

"I have had another conversation with her," said Shand to him that night.

"Have you unravelled the mystery?"

"Not quite; but I have got the fact that there is a mystery. She told me that you and I and she herself ought not to be here. When I asked her why, she said that you and I ought to be gentlemen and that she ought to be a lady. I told her that you and I were gentlemen, in spite of our trousers. 'Ah,' she said, 'there comes the difference; I'm not a lady any longer!' When I contradicted her she snubbed me, and said that I hadn't seen enough of the world to know anything about it. But I'll have it all out of her before I've done."

For some days after that Caldigate kept himself aloof from Mrs. Smith, not at all because he had ceased to notice her or to think about her, but from a feeling of dislike to exhibit rivalry with his friend. Shand was making himself very particular, and he thought that Shand was a fool for his pains. He was becoming angry with Shand, and had serious thoughts of speaking to him with solemn severity. What could such a woman be to him? But at the bottom of all this there was something akin to jealousy. The woman was good-looking, and certainly clever, and was very interesting. Shand, for two or three evenings running, related his success; how Mrs. Smith had communicated to him the fact that she utterly despised those Cromptons, who were distant cousins of her late husband's, and with whom she had come on board; how she preferred to be alone to having aught to do with them; how she had one or two books with her, and

passed some hours in reading; and how she was poor, very poor, but still had something on which to live for a few weeks after landing. But Caldigate fancied that there must be a betrayal of trust in these revelations, and though he was in truth interested about the woman did not give much encouragement to his friend.

"Upon my word," he said, "I don't seem to care so very much about Mrs. Smith's affairs."

"I do," said Shand, who was thick-skinned and irrepressible. "I declared my intention of unravelling the mystery, and I mean to do it."

"I hope you are not too inquisitive?"

"Of course she likes to have someone to whom she can talk. And what can people talk about on board ship except themselves? A woman who has a mystery always likes to have it unravelled. What else is the good of a mystery?"

He was thick-skinned and irrepressible, but Caldigate endeavoured to show his displeasure. He felt that the poor woman was in coarse hands; and he thought that, had matters gone otherwise, he might have accepted, in a more delicate manner, so much confidence as she chose to vouchsafe.

So it was when they had been a fortnight at sea. They had left home in mid-winter; but now they were in the tropics, near the line, and everything was sultry, sleepy, and warm. Flying fishes were jumping from the waves on to the deck, and when the dusk of night was come, the passengers would stand by the hour together watching the phosphorus on the water. The Southern Cross had shown itself plainly, and possessed the heavens in conjunction with the Bear. The thick woollen drawers which had been so carefully prepared, were no longer in use, and men were going about in

light pantaloons and linen jackets,—those on the quarter-deck at first beautifully clean and white, while our friends of the second cabin were less careful. The women, too, had got quit of their wraps, and lounged about the deck in light attire. During the bright hours of the day the aristocrats, in the stern, were shrouded from the sun by a delightful awning; but, forward, the passengers sought the shade of the loose, idle sails, or screened themselves from the fierce rays as best they might among the hatchways and woodwork. But it was when the burning sun had hidden himself, when the short twilight had disappeared, and the heavens were alive and alight with stars, that all the world of the ship would be crowded on the upper deck. There they would remain, long after the lamps below had been extinguished, some of them sleeping through the whole night in the comparative coolness of the air. But it was from eight, when tea would be over, till midnight, that the hum of voices would be thickest, and the tread of those who walked for their exercise the most frequent.

At such times Caldigate would be often alone; for though he had made acquaintances, and had become indeed intimate with some of those around him, he had never thrust himself into the life of the ship as Shand had done. Charades were acted in the second cabin, in which Shand always took part,—and there were penny readings, at which Shand was often the reader. And he smoked much and drank somewhat with those who smoked and drank. The awe at first inspired by his university superiority and supposed rank in the world had faded almost into nothing, but by Caldigate, unconsciously, much of this had been preserved. I am not sure that he did not envy his friend, but at any

rate he stood aloof. And, in regard to Mrs. Smith, when he saw her walking one evening with Shand in the sweetly dim light of the evening, with her hand upon Shand's arm, he made up his mind that he would think no more about her.

They had been at sea just a fortnight when this happened. And in about a quarter of an hour after this resolve had been formed Mrs. Smith was standing by him and talking to him. A ball was being held on the quarter-deck, or rather, as there was in truth no quarter-deck to the Goldfinder, on that clean, large, luxurious expanse devoted to the aristocracy in the after-part of the vessel. From among the second-class passengers, two fiddlers and a flute player had been procured, who formed the band. At sea you have always to look for your musicians among the second-class passengers. And now under the awning young and old were standing up, and making themselves happy beneath the starlight and the glimmer of the dozen ship-lamps which had been hung around. On board ship there are many sources of joy of which the land knows nothing. You may flirt and dance at sixty; and if you are awkward in the turn of a valse, you may put it down to the motion of the ship. You need wear no gloves, and may drink your soda-and-brandy without being ashamed of it.

It was not for John Caldigate to join the mazes of that dance, though he would have liked it well, and was well fitted by skill and taste for such exercise. But the ground was hallowed on which they trod, and forbidden to him; and though there was probably not a girl or a dancing married woman there who would not have been proud to stand up with Mr. Caldigate of Folking, there was not one who would have dared to

take the hand of a second-class passenger. So he stood, just within his own boundary, and looked and longed. Then there was a voice in his ear. "Do you dance, Mr. Caldigate?"

It was a very pleasant voice, low, but distinct and silvery, infinitely better again than the gown; a voice so distinct and well-managed that it would have been noticed for its peculiar sweetness if coming from any high-bred lady. He turned around and found her face close to his. Why had she come to speak to him when she must have perceived that he had intentionally avoided her?

"I used to be very fond of dancing," he said, "but it is one of the things that have gone away."

"I, too, was fond of dancing; but, as you say, it has gone away. It will come back to you, in half-a-dozen years, perhaps. It can never come back to me. Things do come back to men."

"Why more than to women?"

"You have a resurrection;—I mean here upon earth. We never have. Though we live as long as you, the pleasure seeking years of our lives are much shorter. We burst out into full flowering early in our spring, but long before the summer is over, we are no more than huddled leaves and thick stalks."

"Are you a thick stalk, Mrs. Smith?"

"Unfortunately, not. My flowers are gone while my stalk is still thin and sensitive. And then women can't recuperate."

"I don't quite know what that means."

"Yes, you do. It is good English enough even for Cambridge by this time. If you had made a false step, got into debt and ran away, or mistaken another man's wife for your own, or disappeared altogether

under a cloud for a while, you could retrieve your honour, and, sinking at twenty-five or thirty, could come up from out of the waters at thirty-five as capable of enjoyment and almost as fresh as ever. But a woman does not bear submersion. She is draggled ever afterwards. She must hide everything by a life of lies, or she will get no admittance anywhere. The man is rather the better liked because he has sown his wild oats broadly. Of all these ladies dancing there, which dances the best? There is not one who really knows how to dance."

CHAPTER VI

MRS. SMITH

SHE had changed the conversation so suddenly, rushing off from that great question as to the condition of women generally to the very unimportant matter of the dancing powers of the ladies who were manœuvring before them, that Caldigate hardly knew how to travel with her so quickly. "They all dance well enough for ship dancing," he replied; "but as to what you were saying about women——"

"No, Mr. Caldigate; they don't dance well enough for ship dancing. Dancing, wherever it be done, should be graceful. A woman may at any rate move her feet in accordance with time, and she need not skip, nor prance, nor jump, even on board ship. Look at that stout lady."

"Mrs. Callander?"

Everybody by this time knew everybody's name.

"If she is Mrs. Callander?"

Mrs. Smith, no doubt, knew very well that it was Mrs. Callander.

"Does not your ear catch separately the thud of her foot-fall every time she comes to the ground?"

"She is fat, fair, and forty."

"Fat enough;—and what she lacks in fairness may be added on to the forty; but if she were less ambitious and had a glimmer of taste, she might do better than that. You see that girl with the green scarf round

her? She is young and good-looking. Why should she spring about like a bear on a hot iron?"

"You should go and teach them."

"It is just what I should like; only they would not be taught; and I should be stern, and tell them the truth."

"Why don't you go and dance with them yourself?"

"I?"

"Why not? There is one second-class lady there?"

This was true. For though none of the men would have been admitted from the inferior rank to join the superior, the rule of demarcation had so far been broken that a pretty girl who was known to some of the first-class passengers had been invited to come over the line and join the amusements of the evening. "She dances about as well as any of them."

"If you were among them would you dare to come out and ask me to join them? That is a question which you won't even dare to answer."

"It is a little personal."

"'No,' you ought to say. 'I could not do that because your clothes are so poor, and because of your ragged old hat, and I am not quite sure that your shoes are fit to be seen.' Is not that what you would say, if you said what you thought?"

"Perhaps it is."

"And if you said all that you thought, perhaps you would remind me that a woman of whom nobody knows anything is always held to be disreputable. That girl, no doubt, has her decent belongings. I have nobody."

"You have your friends on board."

"No; I have not. I have not a single friend on board. Those Cromptons were very unwillingly persuaded to take a sort of interest in me, though they

really know nothing about me. And I have already lost any good which might come from their protection. She told me yesterday that I ought not to walk about with Mr. Shand."

"And what did you say?"

"Of course I told her to mind her own business. I had no alternative. A woman has to show a little spirit or she will be trodden absolutely into the dirt. It was something to have a woman to speak to, even though I had not a thought in common with her;—though she was to my feeling as inferior to myself as I no doubt am thought to be by that fat prancing woman to herself. Even Mrs. Crompton's countenance was of value. But if I had yielded she would have taken it out in tyranny. So now we don't speak."

"That is a pity."

"It is a pity. You watch them all and see how they look at me,—the women, I mean. They know that Mr. Shand speaks to me, and that you and Mr. Shand are the two gentlemen we have among us. There are, no doubt, a dozen of them watching me now, somewhere, and denouncing me for the impropriety of my behaviour."

"Is it improper?"

"What do you think?"

"Why may we not talk as well as others?"

"Exactly. But there are people who are tabooed. Look at that Miss Green and the ship doctor." At that moment the ship's doctor and the young lady in question came close to them in the dance. "There is no harm in Miss Green talking by the hour together with the doctor, because she is comfortably placed. She has got an old father and mother on board who don't look after her, and everything is respectable. But if I show

any of the same propensities, I ought almost to be put in irons."

"Has anybody else been harsh to you?"

"The Captain has been making inquiries,—no doubt with the idea that he may at last be driven to harsh measures. Have you got a sister?"

"No."

"Or a mother?"

"No."

"Or a housemaid?"

"Not even a housemaid. I have no female belongings whatever."

"Don't you know that if you had a sister, and a mother, and a housemaid, your mother would quite expect that your sister should in time have a lover, but that she would be horrified at the idea of the housemaid having a follower?"

"I did not know that. I thought housemaids got married sometimes."

"Human nature is stronger than tyranny."

"But what does all this mean? You are not a housemaid, and you have not got a mistress?"

"Not exactly. But at present;—if I say my outward woman you'll know what I mean, perhaps."

"I think I shall."

"Well; my present outward woman stands to me in lieu of the housemaid's broom, and the united authority of the Captain and Mrs. Crompton make up the mistress between them. And the worst of it all is, that though I have to endure the tyranny, I have not got the follower. It is as hard upon Mr. Shand as it is upon me."

"Shand, I suppose, can take care of himself."

"No doubt;—and so in real truth can I. I can

stand apart and defy them all; and as I look at them looking at me, and almost know with what words they are maligning me, I can tell myself that they are beneath me, and that I care nothing for them. I shall do nothing which will enable anyone to interfere with me. But it seems hard that all this should be so because I am a widow,—and because I am alone,—and because I am poorly clothed.”

As she said this there were tears in her eyes, true ones, and something of the sound of a broken sob in her voice. And Caldigate was moved. The woman's condition was to be pitied, whether it had been produced with or without fault on her own part. To be alone is always sad,—even for a man; but for a woman, and for a young woman, it is doubly melancholy. Of a sudden the dancing was done and the lamps were taken away.

“If you do not want to go to bed,” he said, “let us take a turn.”

“I never go to bed. I mean here, on board ship. I linger up on deck, half hiding myself about the place, till I see some quartermaster eyeing me suspiciously, and then I creep down into the little hole which I occupy with three of Mrs. Crompton's children, and then I cry myself to sleep. But I don't call that going to bed.”

“Take a turn now.”

“I shall feel like the housemaid talking to her fellower through the area gate. But she is brave, and why should I be a coward?” Then she put her hand upon his arm. “And you,” she said, “why are not you dancing in the other part of the ship with Mrs. Callander and Miss Green, instead of picking your way among the hencoops here with me?”

"This suited my pocket best,—and my future prospects."

"You are making a delightful experiment in roughing it,—as people eat picnic dinners out in the woods occasionally, so that there may be a break in the monotony of chairs and tables."

While Shand had been unravelling her mystery, she, perhaps, had been more successful in unravelling his.

"We intend to be miners."

"And to return home before long with some vast treasure. I hope you may be successful."

"You seem to doubt it."

"Of course it is doubtful. If not, the thing would be common and hardly worth the doing. Will Mr. Shand be very persistent as a working miner?"

"I hope so."

"He seems to me to have great gifts of idleness, which on board ship are a blessing. How I do envy men when I see them smoking. It seems to me that nothing is wanting to them. Women have their needlework; but though they hate it less than idleness, they do hate it. But you really like your tobacco."

"I don't like being idle. I read a good deal. Do you read?"

"I have but few books here. I have read more, perhaps, than most young women of my age. I came away in such a hurry that I have almost nothing with me."

"Can I lend you books?"

"If you will. I will promise to take care of them."

"I have 'The Heartbroken One,' by Spratt, you know. It is very absurd, but full of life from beginning to end. All that Spratt writes is very lively."

"I don't think I care for Spratt. He may be lively, but he's not life-like."

"And 'Michael Bamfold.' It is hard work, perhaps, but very thoughtful, if you can digest that sort of thing."

"I hate thought."

"What do you say to Miss Bouverie's last—'Ridden to a Standstill'; a little loud, perhaps, but very interesting? Or 'Green Grow the Rushes, O,' by Mrs. Tremaine? None of Mrs. Tremaine's people do anything that anybody would do, but they all talk well."

"I hate novels written by women. Their girls are so unlovely, and their men such absurdly fine fellows!"

"I have William Coxe's 'Lock picked at Last,' of which I will defy you to find the secret till you have got to the end of it."

"I am a great deal too impatient."

"And Thompson's 'Four Marquises.' That won't give you any trouble, because you will know it all from the first chapter."

"And never have a moment of excitement from the beginning to the end. I don't think I care very much for novels. Have you nothing else?"

Caldigate had many other books, a Shakespeare, some lighter poetry, and sundry heavier works of which he did not wish specially to speak, lest he should seem to be boasting of his own literary taste; but at last it was settled that on the next morning he should supply her with what choice he had among the poets. Then at about midnight they parted, and Caldigate, as he found his way down to his cabin, saw the quartermaster with his eye fixed upon Mrs. Smith. There is no so stern guardian of morality and propriety as your old quartermaster on board a first-class ship.

"You have been having a grand time of it with Mrs. Smith," said Shand as soon as Caldigate was in their cabin.

"Pretty well,—as far as fine times go on board ship. Is there anything against it?"

"Oh, no, not that I know of. I started the hare; if you choose to run it I have no right to complain, I suppose."

"I don't know anything about the hare, but you certainly have no right to complain because I have been talking to Mrs. Smith;—unless, indeed, you tell me that you are going to make her Mrs. Shand."

"You are much more likely to make her Mrs. Caldigate."

"I don't know that I should have any objection;—that is, if I wanted a wife. She is good-looking, clever, well-educated, and would be well-mannered were it not that she bristles up against the ill-usage of the world too roughly."

"I didn't know it had gone so far as that," said Shand, angrily.

"Nor did I, till you suggested it to me. Now I think I'll go to sleep, if you please, and dream about it."

He did not go to sleep, but lay awake half thinking and half dreaming. He certainly liked Mrs. Smith; but then, as he had begun to find out of himself, he liked women's society generally. He was almost jealous of the doctor, because the doctor was allowed to talk to Miss Green and waltz with Miss Green, whereas he could not approach her. Then he thought of Maria Shand, and that kiss in the little back parlour,—the kiss which had not meant much, but which had meant something; and then of Julia Babington, to whom he was not quite sure that he ought not to feel himself

engaged. But the face that was clearest to him of all,—and which became the dearer the nearer that he approached to a state of dozing,—was that of Hester Bolton, whose voice he had hardly heard, who had barely spoken to him;—the tips of whose fingers he had only just touched. If there was any one thing fixed on his mind it was that, as soon as he had put together a large lump of gold, he would go back to Cambridge and win Hester Bolton to be his wife. But yet what a singular woman was this Mrs. Smith! As to marrying her, that of course had been a joke produced by the petulance of his snoring friend. He began to dislike Shand, because he did snore so loudly, and drank so much bottled ale, and smelt so strongly of cavendish tobacco. Mrs. Smith was at any rate much too good for Shand. Surely she must have been a lady, or her voice would not have been sweet and silvery? And though she did bristle roughly against the ill-usage of the world, and say strong things, she was never absolutely indelicate or even loud. And she was certainly very interesting. How did it come to pass that she was so completely alone, so poor, so unfriended, and yet possessed of such gifts? There certainly was a mystery, and it would certainly be his fate, and not the fate of Dick Shand, to unravel it. The puzzle was much too delicate and too intricate for Dick Shand's rough hands. Then, giving his last waking thoughts for a moment to Hester Bolton, he went to sleep in spite of the snoring.

On the next morning, as soon as he was out of bed, he opened a small portmanteau in which he had put up some volumes the day before he left Pollington, and to which he had not yet had recourse since the beginning of the voyage. From these he would select one

or two for the use of his new friend. So he dragged out the valise from beneath the berth, while Shand abused him for the disturbance he made. On the top, lying on the other volumes, which were as he had placed them, was a little book, prettily bound, by no means new, which he was sure had never been placed there by himself. He took it up, and, standing in the centre of the cabin, between the light of the porthole and Dick's bed, he examined it. It was a copy of Thomson's "Seasons," and on the fly-leaf was written in a girl's hand the name of its late owner,—Maria Shand. The truth flashed upon him at once. She must have gone down on that last night after he was in bed, and thus have made her little offering in silence, knowing that it would be hidden from him until he was far away from her.

"What book is that?" said Shand suddenly, emerging with his head and shoulders from the low berth.

"A book of mine," said Caldigate, disconcerted for the moment.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"I am looking for something to lend to Mrs. Smith."

"That is Molly's Thomson's 'Seasons,'" said the brother, remembering, as we are so apt to remember, the old thing that had met his eye so often in the old house. "Where did you get it?"

"I didn't steal it, Dick."

"I don't suppose you did; but I'm sure it's the book I say."

"No doubt it is. If you think it is in bad hands, shall I give it back to you?"

"I don't want it. If she gave it to you, she was a fool for her pains."

"I don't see that."

"I would rather, at any rate, that you would not lend a book with my sister's name in it to Mrs. Smith."

"I was not thinking of doing so. She wants a Shakespeare that I have got here, and a volume of Tennyson." Then Dick retreated back into his berth, and snored again, while Caldigate dressed himself. When that operation was completed,—which, including his lavations, occupied about five minutes,—he went up on the deck with the books for Mrs. Smith in his hand, and with Thomson's "Seasons" in his pocket. So the poor girl had absolutely stolen downstairs in the middle of the cold night, and had opened the case and re-fastened it, in order that he, when in strange lands, might find himself in possession of something that had been hers!

He had not been alone a minute or two, and was looking about to see if Mrs. Smith was there, when he was accosted by the Captain. The Captain was a pleasant-looking, handsome man, about forty-five years of age, who had the good word of almost everybody on board, but who had not before spoken specially to Caldigate.

"Good-morning, Mr. Caldigate. I hope you find yourself fairly comfortable where you are."

"Pretty well, thank you, Captain."

"If there is anything I can do."

"We have all that we have a right to expect."

"I wish, Mr. Caldigate, I could invite you and your friends to come astern among us sometimes, but it would be contrary to rule."

"I can quite understand that, Captain."

"You are doing a bit of roughing,—no doubt for the

sake of experience. If you only knew the sort of roughing I've had in my time!"

"I daresay."

"Salt pork and hard biscuit, and only half enough of that. You find yourself among some queer fellow-passengers, I daresay, Mr. Caldigate."

"Everybody is very civil."

"They're sure to be that to a gentleman. But one has to be careful. The women are the most dangerous." Then the Captain laughed, as though it had been only a joke,—this allusion to the women. But Caldigate knew that there was more than a joke in it. The Captain had intended to warn him against Mrs. Smith.

CHAPTER VII

THE THREE ATTEMPTS

SOMETHING more than a month had gone by, and John Caldigate and Mrs. Smith were very close companions. This had not been effected without considerable opposition, partly on the part of Shand, and partly by the ship's inhabitants generally. The inhabitants of the ship were inimical to Mrs. Smith. She was a woman who had no friends; and the very female who had first appeared as a friend was now the readiest to say hard things of her. And Caldigate was a handsome, well-mannered young man. By this time all the ladies in the first-class knew very well who he was, and some of them had spoken to him. On one or two occasions the stern law of the vessel had been broken; and he had been absolutely invited to sit on those august after-benches. He was known to be a gentleman, and believed, on the evidence of Dick Shand, to be possessed of considerable means. It was therefore a thing horrible to all of them, and particularly to Miss Green, that he should allow himself to be enticed into difficulties by such a creature as that Mrs. Smith. Miss Green had already been a little cold to the doctor in consequence of a pleasant half hour spent by her in Caldigate's company, as they looked over the side of the vessel at the flying fish. Mrs. Callander had been with them, and everything had been quite proper. But what a pity it was that he should devote so much of his time to that woman! "Fancy his condition if he should be

induced to marry her," said Miss Green, holding up her hands in horror! The idea was so terrible that Mrs. Callander declared that she would speak to him. "Nobody ever disliked interfering so much as I do," said Mrs. Callander; "but sometimes a word from a lady will go so far with a young man!" Mrs. Callander was a most respectable woman, whose father had begun life as a cattle drover in the colonies, but had succeeded in amassing a considerable fortune. "Oh, I do wish that something may be done to save him!" said Miss Green.

Among the second-class passengers the same feeling existed quite as strongly. The woman herself had not only been able, but had been foolish enough to show that in spite of her gown she considered herself superior to them all. When it was found that she was, in truth, handsome to look upon,—that her words were soft and well chosen,—that she could sit apart and read,—and that she could trample upon Mrs. Crompton in her scorn, then,—for a while, there were some who made little efforts to get into her good graces. She might even have made an ally of good-natured Mrs. Bones, the wife of the butcher, who was going out with his large family to try his fortune at Melbourne. Mrs. Bones had been injured, after some ship fashion, by Mrs. Crompton, and would have made herself pleasant. But Mrs. Smith had despised them all, and had shown her contempt, and was now as deeply suspected by Mrs. Bones as by Mrs. Crompton or Mrs. Callander.

But of all the foes to this intimacy, Dick Shand was for a time the most bitter and the most determined. No doubt this arose at first from jealousy. He had declared his purpose of unravelling the mystery; but the

task had been taken out of his hands, and the unravelling was being done by another. And the more that the woman was abused, and the more intent were all the people in regard to her wicked determination to be intimate with Caldigate, the more interesting she became. Dick, who was himself the very imp of imprudence,—who had never been deterred from doing anything he fancied by any glimmer of control,—would have been delighted to be the hero of all the little stories that were being told. But as that morsel of bread had been taken, as it were, from between his very teeth by the unjustifiable interference of his friend, he had become more alive than anyone else to the danger of the whole proceeding. He acknowledged to the Captain that his friend was making a fool of himself; and, though he was a little afraid of Caldigate, he resolved upon interfering.

“Don’t you think you are making an ass of yourself about this woman?” he said.

“I daresay I am.”

“Well!”

“All the wise men, from David downwards, have made asses of themselves about women; and why should I be wiser than the rest?”

“That’s nonsense, you know.”

“Very likely.”

“I am trying to talk to you in earnest.”

“You make such a failure of it, old boy, that I am compelled to talk nonsense in return. The idea of your preaching! Here I am with nothing special to do, and I like to amuse myself. Ought not that to be enough for you?”

“But what is to be the end of it?” Dick Shand asked, very solemnly.

"How can I tell? But the absurdity is that such a man as you should talk about the end of anything. Did you ever look before you leaped in your life?"

"We are to be together, you know, and it won't do for us to be hampered with that woman."

"Won't it? Then let me tell you that, if I choose to hamper myself with that woman, or with a whole harem of women, and am not deterred by any consideration for myself, I certainly shall not be deterred by any consideration for you. Do you understand me?"

"That is not being a true partner," said Shand.

"I'm quite sure of this,—that I'm likely to be as true as you are. I'm not aware that I have entered into any terms with you by which I have bound myself to any special mode of living. I have left England, as I fancy you have done also, because I desired more conventional freedom than one can find among the folk at home. And now, on the first outset, I am to be cautioned and threatened by you because I have made acquaintance with a young woman. Of all the moral pastors and masters that one might come across in the world, you, Dick Shand, appear to me to be the most absurd. But you are so far right as this, that if my conduct is shocking to you, you had better leave me to my wickedness."

"You are always so d— upsetting," said Dick, "that no one can speak to you." Then Dick turned away, and there was nothing more said about Mrs. Smith on that occasion.

The next to try her hand was Mrs. Callander. By this time the passengers had become familiar with the ship, and knew what they might and what they might not do. The second-class passengers were not often found intruding across the bar, but the first-class fre-

quently made visits to their friends amidships. In this way Mrs. Callander had become acquainted with our two gold-seekers, and often found herself in conversation with one or the other. Even Miss Green, as has been stated before, would come and gaze upon the waves from the inferior part of the deck.

"What a very nice voyage we are having, Mr. Caldigate," Mrs. Callander said one afternoon.

"Yes, indeed. It is getting a little cold now, but we shall enjoy that after all the heat."

"Quite so; only I suppose it will be very cold when we get quite south. You still find yourself tolerably comfortable."

"I shall be glad to have it over," said Caldigate, who had in truth become disgusted with Dick's snoring.

"I daresay,—I am sure we shall. My young people are getting very tired of it. Children, when they are accustomed to every comfort on shore, of course, feel it grievously. I suppose you are rather crowded?"

"Of course we are crowded. One can't have a twenty-foot square room on board ship."

"No, indeed. But then you are with your friend, and that is much pleasanter than a stranger."

"That would depend on whether the stranger snored, Mrs. Callander."

"Don't talk of snoring, Mr. Caldigate. If you only heard Mr. Callander! But, as I was saying, you must have some very queer characters down there." She had not been saying anything of the kind, but she found a difficulty in introducing her subject.

"Take them altogether, they are a very decent, pleasant, well-mannered set of people, and all of them in earnest about their future lives."

"Poor creatures! But I daresay they're very good." Then she paused a moment, and looked into

his face. She had undertaken a duty, and she was not the woman to shrink from it. So she told herself at that moment. And yet she was very much afraid of him as she saw the squareness of his forehead, and the set of his mouth. And there was a frown across his brow, as though he were preparing himself to fight. "You must have found it hard to accommodate yourselves to them, Mr. Caldigate?"

"Not at all."

"Of course we all know that you are a gentleman."

"I am much obliged to you; but I do not know any word that requires a definition so much as that. I am going to work hard to earn my bread; and I suppose these people are going to do the same."

"There will always be some danger in such society," said Mrs. Callander.

"I hope I may escape any great evil."

"I hope so too, Mr. Caldigate. You probably have had a long roll of ancestors before you?"

"We all have that;—back to Adam."

"Ah! but I mean a family roll, of which you ought to be proud;—all ladies and gentlemen."

"Upon my word, I don't know."

"So I hear, and I have no doubt it is true." Then she paused, looking again into his face. It was very square, and his lips were hard, and there was a gleam of anger in his eyes. She wished herself back again in her own part of the ship; but she had boasted to Miss Green that she was not the woman to give up a duty when she had undertaken it. Though she was frightened, still she must go on. "I hope you will excuse me, Mr. Caldigate."

"I am sure you will not say anything that I cannot excuse."

"Don't you think——?" Then she paused. She.

had looked into his face again, and was so little satisfied that she did not dare to go on. He would not help her in the least, but stood there looking at her, with something of a smile stealing over the hardness of his face, but with such an expression that the smile was even worse than the hardness.

“Were you going to speak to me about another lady, Mrs. Callander?”

“I was. That is what I was going to speak of——” She was anxious to remonstrate against that word lady, but her courage failed her.

“Then don’t you think that perhaps you had better leave it alone. I am very much obliged to you, and all that kind of thing; and as to myself, I really shouldn’t care what you said. Any good advice would be taken most gratefully,—if it didn’t affect anyone else. But you might say things of the lady in question which I shouldn’t bear patiently.”

“She can’t be your equal.”

“I won’t hear even that patiently. You know nothing about her, except that she is a second-class passenger,—in which matter she is exactly my equal. If you come to that, don’t you think that you are degrading yourself in coming here and talking to me. I am not your equal.”

“But you are.”

“And so is she, then. We shan’t arrive at anything, Mrs. Callander, and so you had better give it up.” Whereupon she did give it up, and retreated to her own part of the ship, but not with a very good grace.

They had certainly become very intimate,—John Caldigate and Mrs. Smith; and there could be no doubt, that in the ordinary language of the world, he was making a fool of himself. He did, in fact, know nothing

about her but what she told herself, and this amounted to little more than three statements, which might or might not be true,—that she had gone on the stage in opposition to her friends,—that she had married an actor, who had treated her with great cruelty,—and that he had died of drink. And with each of these stories, there had been an accompaniment of mystery. She had not told him her maiden name, nor what had been the condition of her parents, nor whether they were living, nor at what theatres she and her husband had acted, nor when he had died. She had expressed a hope that she might get an engagement in the colonies, but she had not spoken of any recommendation or letters of introduction. He simply knew of her that her name was Euphemia Smith.

In that matter of her clothes there had been a great improvement, but made very gradually. She had laughed at her own precautions, saying, that in her poverty she had wished to save everything that could be saved, and that she had only intended to make herself look like others in the same class. "And I had wanted to avoid all attention,—at first," she said, smiling, as she looked up at him.

"In which you have been altogether unsuccessful," he replied, "as you are certainly more talked about than anyone in the ship."

"Has it been my fault?" she asked.

Then he comforted her, saying that it certainly had not been her fault; that she had been reticent and reserved till she had been either provoked or invited to come forth; and, in fact, that her conduct had been in all respects feminine, pretty, and decorous;—as to all of which he was not, perhaps, the best judge in the world.

But she was certainly much pleasanter to look at, and even to talk to, now that she had put on a small, clean, black felt hat instead of the broken straw, and had got out from her trunks a pretty, warm shawl, and placed a ribbon or two about her in some indescribable manner, and was no longer ashamed of showing her shoes as she sat about upon the deck. There could be no doubt, as she was seen now, that she was the most attractive female on board the ship; but it may be doubted whether the anger of the Mrs. Cromptons, Mrs. Callanders, and Miss Greens was mitigated by the change. The battle against her became stronger, and the duty of rescuing that infatuated young man from her sorceries was more clear than ever;—if only anything could be done to rescue him!

What could be done? Mrs. Smith could not be locked up. No one,—not even the Captain,—could send her down to her own wretched little cabin because she would talk with a gentleman. Talking is allowed on board ship, and even flirting, to a certain extent. Mrs. Smith's conduct with Mr. Caldigate was not more peculiar than that of Miss Green and the doctor. Only it pleased certain people to think that Miss Green might be fond of the doctor if she chose, and that Mrs. Smith had no right to be fond of any man. There was a stubbornness about both the sinners which resolved to set public opinion at defiance. The very fact that others wished to interfere with him made Caldigate determined to resent all interference; and the woman, with perhaps a deeper insight into her own advantages, was brave enough to be able to set opposition at defiance.

They were about a week from their port when the captain,—Captain Munday,—was induced to take the

matter into his own hands. It is hardly too much to say that he was pressed to do so by the united efforts of the first-class passengers. It was dreadful to think that this unfortunate young man should go on shore merely to become the prey of such a woman as that. So Captain Munday, who at heart was not afraid of his passenger,—but who persisted in saying that no good could be done, and who had, as may be remembered, already made a slight attempt,—was induced to take the matter in hand. He came up to Caldigate on the deck one afternoon, and without any preface began his business. “Mr. Caldigate,” he said, “I am afraid you are getting into a scrape with one of your fellow-passengers.”

“What do you call a scrape, Captain Munday?”

“I should call it a scrape if a young gentleman of your position and your prospects were to find himself engaged on board ship to marry a woman he knew nothing about.”

“Do you know anything about my position and prospects, Captain Munday?”

“I know you are a gentleman.”

“And I think you know less about the lady.”

“I know nothing;—but I will tell you what I hear.”

“I really would rather that you did not. Of course, Captain Munday, on board your own ship you are a despot, and I must say that you have made everything very pleasant for us. But I don't think even your position entitles you to talk to me about my private affairs,—or about hers. You say you know nothing. Is it manly to repeat what one hears about a poor, forlorn woman?” Then the Captain retreated without another word, owing to himself that he was beaten. If this foolish young man chose to make for himself a bed of

that kind, he must lie upon it. Captain Munday went away shrugging his shoulders, and spoke no further word to John Caldigate on that or any other subject during the voyage.

Caldigate had driven off his persecutors valiantly, and had taught them all to think that he was resolute in his purposes in regard to Mrs. Smith, let those purposes be what they might; but nothing could be further from the truth; for he had no purposes; and was, within his own mind, conscious of his lack of all purpose, and very conscious of his folly. And though he could repel Mrs. Callander and the Captain,—as he had always repelled those who had attempted to control him,—still he knew that they had been right. Such intimacy as this could not be wise, and its want of wisdom became the more strongly impressed upon him the nearer he got to shore, and the more he felt that when he had got ashore he should not know how to act in regard to her.

The intimacy had certainly become very close. He had expressed his great admiration, and she had replied that, "had things not been as they were," she could have returned the feeling. But she did not say what the things were which might have been otherwise. Nor did she seem to attempt to lead him on to further and more definite proposals. And she never spoke of any joint action between them when on shore, though she gave herself up to his society here on board the ship. She seemed to think that they were then to part, as though one would be going one way, and one the other;—but he felt that after so close an intimacy they could not part like that.

CHAPTER VIII

REACHING MELBOURNE

THINGS went on in the same way till the night before the morning on which they were to enter Hobson's Bay. Hobson's Bay, as everyone knows, is the inlet of the sea into which the little river runs on which Melbourne is built. After leaving the tropics they had gone down south, and had encountered showers and wind, and cold weather, but now they had come up again into warm latitudes and fine autumn weather,—for it was the beginning of March, and the world out there is upside down. Before that evening nothing had been said between Mrs. Smith and John Caldigate as to any future; not a word to indicate that when the journey should be over, there would or that there would not be further intercourse between them. She had purposely avoided any reference to a world after this world of the ship, even refusing, in her half sad but half joking manner, to discuss matters so far ahead. But he felt that he could not leave her on board, as he would the other passengers, without a word spoken as to some future meeting. There will arrive on occasions a certain pitch of intimacy,—which cannot be defined as may a degree of cousinship, but which is perfectly understood by the persons concerned,—so close as to forbid such mere shaking of the hands. There are many men, and perhaps more women, cautious enough and wise enough to think of this beforehand, and, thinking of it, to guard themselves from the dan-

gerous attractions of casual companions by a composed manner and unenthusiastic conversation. Who does not know the sagacious lady, who, after sitting at table with the same gentleman for a month, can say, "Good-bye, Mr. Jones," just as though Mr. Jones had been a stranger under her notice but for a day. But others gush out, and when Mr. Jones takes his departure, hardly know how not to throw themselves into his arms. The intercourse between our hero and Mrs. Smith had been such that, as a gentleman, he could not leave her without some allusion to future meetings. That was all up to the evening before their arrival. The whole ship's company, captain, officers, quarter-masters, passengers, and all, were quite sure that she had succeeded in getting a promise of marriage from him. But there had been nothing of the kind.

Among others, Dick Shand was sure that there was some entanglement. Entanglement was the word he always used in discussing the matter with Mrs. Callander. Between Dick and his friend there had been very little confidential communication of late. Caldigate had forbidden Shand to talk to him about Mrs. Smith, and thus had naturally closed the man's mouth on other matters. And then they had fallen into different sets. Dick, at least, had fallen into a set, while Caldigate had hardly associated with any but the one dangerous friend. Dick had lived much with a bevy of noisy young men who had been given to games and smoking, and to a good deal of drink. Caldigate had said not a word, even when on one occasion Dick had stumbled down into the cabin very much the worse for what he had taken. How could he find fault with Dick's folly when he would not allow Dick to say a word to him as to his own? But on this last day at

sea it became necessary that they should understand each other.

"What do you mean to do when you land?" Caldigate asked.

All that had been settled between them very exactly long since. At a town called Nobble, about three hundred miles west of Sydney, there lived a man, supposed to be knowing in gold, named Crinkett, with whom they had corresponded, and to whom they intended, in the first instance, to apply. And about twenty miles beyond Nobble were the new and now much reputed Ahalala diggings, at which they purposed to make their first *début*. It had been decided that they would go direct from Melbourne to Nobble,—not round by Sydney so as to see more of the world, and thus spend more money—but by the direct route, taking the railway to Albury, and the coaches, which they were informed were running between Albury and Nobble. And it had also been determined that they would spend but two nights in Melbourne,—“just to get their things washed,”—so keen had they been in their determination to begin their work. But on all these matters there had been no discussion now for a month, nor even an allusion to them.

"What do you mean to do when we land?" Caldigate asked on that last day.

"I thought all that was settled. But I suppose you are going to change everything?"

"I am going to change nothing. Only you seem to have got into such a way of life that I didn't know whether you would be prepared for serious work."

"I shall be as well prepared as you are, I don't doubt," said Dick. "I have no impediment of any kind."

"I certainly have none. Then we will start by the first train on Wednesday morning for Albury. We must have our heavy things sent round by sea to Sydney, and get them from there as best we can. When we are a little fixed, one of us can run down to Sydney."

And so it was settled, without any real confidence between them, but in conformity with their previous arrangements.

It was on the evening of the same day, after they had sighted Cape Otway, that Mrs. Smith and Caldigate began their last conversation on board the Goldfinder,—a conversation which lasted, with one or two interruptions, late into the night.

"So we have come to the end of it," she said.

"To the end of what?"

"To the end of all that is pleasant and easy and safe. Don't you remember my telling you how I dreaded the finish? Here I have been fairly comfortable, and have in many respects enjoyed it. I have had you to talk to; and there has been a flavour of old days about it. What shall I be doing this time tomorrow?"

"I don't know your plans."

"Exactly;—and I have not told you, because I would not have you bothered with me when I land. You have enough on your own hands; and if I were to be a burden to you now it might be a serious trouble. I am afraid poor Mr. Shand objects to me."

"You don't think that would stand in my way?"

"It stands in mine. Of course, with your pride and your obstinacy you would tell Mr. Shand to go to—the devil if he ventured to object to any little delay that might be occasioned by looking after me. Then Mr. Shand would go—there, or elsewhere; and all

your plans would be broken up, and you would be without a companion."

"Unless I had you." Of all the words which he could have spoken in such an emergency these were the most foolish; and yet, at so tender a moment, how were they to be repressed?

"I do think that Dick Shand is dangerous," she answered, laughing; "but I should be worse. I am afraid Dick Shand will—drink."

"If so we must part. And what would you do?"

"What would I do? What could I do?" Then there was a pause. "Perhaps I should want you to—marry me, which would be worse than Dick Shand's drinking. Eh?"

There is an obligation on a man to persevere when a woman has encouraged him in love-making. It is like riding at a fence. When once you have set your horse at it you must go on, however impracticable it may appear as you draw close to it. If you have never looked at the fence at all,—if you have ridden quite the other way, making for some safe gate or clinging to the dull lane,—then there will be no excitement, but also there will be no danger and no disgrace. Caldigate had ridden hard at the fence, and could not crane at it now that it was so close to him. He could only trust to his good fortune to carry him safe over. "I don't suppose you would want it," he said, "but I might."

"You would want me, but you would not want me for always. I should be a burden less easy to shake off than Dick Shand."

"Is that the way a man is always to look at a woman?"

"It is the way in which they do, I think. I often wonder that any man is ever fool enough to marry. A

poor man may want someone to serve him, and may be able to get service in no other way; or a man, poor in another way, may find an heiress convenient;—but otherwise I think men only marry when they are caught. Women are prehensile things, which have to cling to something for nourishment and support. When I come across such a one as you I naturally put out my feelers.”

“I have not been aware of it.”

“Yes, you are; and I do not doubt that your mind is vacillating about me. I am sure you like me.”

“Certainly, I like you.”

“And you know that I love you.”

“I did not know it.”

“Yes, you did. You are not the man to be diffident of yourself in such a matter. You must either think that I love you or that I have been a great hypocrite in pretending to do so. Love you!” They were sitting together on a large spar which was lashed on to the deck, and which had served throughout all the voyage for a seat for second-class passengers. There were others now on the farther end of it; but there was a feeling that when Caldigate and Mrs. Smith were together it would not be civil to intrude upon their privacy. At this time it was dark; but their eyes had become used to the gloom, and each could see the other's face. “Love you!” she repeated, looking up at him, speaking in a very low voice, but yet, oh so clearly, so that not a fraction of a sound was lost to his ears, with no special emotion in her face, with no contortion, no grimace, but with her eyes fixed upon his. “How should it be possible that I should not love you? For two months we have been together as people seldom are in the world,—as they never can be without

hating each other or loving each other thoroughly. You have been very good to me who am all alone and desolate. And you are clever, educated,—and a man. How should I not love you? And I know from the touch of your hand, from your breath when I feel it on my face, from the fire of your eye, and from the tenderness of your mouth, that you, too, love me.”

“I do,” he said.

“But as there may be marriage without love, so there may be love without marriage. You cannot but feel how little you know of me, and ignorant as you are of so much, that to marry me might be—ruin.” It was just what he had told himself over and over again, when he had been trying to resolve what he would do in regard to her. “Don’t you know that?”

“I know that it might have been so among the connections of home life.”

“And to you the connections of home life may all come back. That woman talked about your ‘roll of ancestors.’ Coming from her it was absurd. But there was some truth in it. You know that were you to marry me, say to-morrow, in Melbourne, it would shut you out from—well, not the possibility, but the probability of return.”

“I do not want to go back.”

“Nor do I want to hinder you from doing so. If we were alike desolate, alike alone, alike cast out, oh then, what a heaven of happiness I should think had been opened to me by the idea of joining myself to you! There is nothing I could not do for you. But I will not be a millstone round your neck.”

She had taken so much the more prominent part in all this that he felt himself compelled by his manliness to say something in contradiction to it—something that

should have the same flavour about it as had her self-abnegation and declared passion. He also must be unselfish and enthusiastic. "I do not deny that there is truth in what you say."

"It is true."

"Of course I love you."

"It ought to be of course,—now."

"And of course I do not mean to part from you now, as though we were never to see each other again."

"I hope not quite that."

"Certainly not. I shall therefore hold you as engaged to me, and myself as engaged to you,—unless something should occur to separate us." It was a foolish thing to say, but he did not know how to speak without being foolish. It is not usual that a gentleman should ask a lady to be engaged to him—"unless something should occur to separate them!" "You will consent to that," he said.

"What I will consent to is this, that I will be yours, all yours, whenever you may choose to send for me. At any moment I will be your wife for the asking. But you shall go away first, and shall think of it, and reflect upon it,—so that I may not have to reproach myself with having caught you."

"Caught me?"

"Well, yes, caught you. I do feel that I have caught you,—almost. I do feel,—almost,—that I ought to have had nothing to do with you. From the beginning of it all I knew that I ought to have nothing to say to you. You are too good for me." Then she rose from her place as though to leave him. "I will go down now," she said, "because I know you will have many things to do. To-morrow, when we get up, we shall be in the harbour, and you will be on shore quite early. There

will be no time for a word of farewell then. I will meet you again here just before we go to bed,—say at half-past ten. Then we will arrange, if we can arrange, how we may meet again.”

And so she glided away from him, and he was left alone, sitting on the spar. Now, at any rate, he had engaged himself. There could not be any doubt about that. He certainly could not be justified in regarding himself as free because she had told him that she would give him time to think of it. Of course he was engaged to marry her. When a man has been successful in his wooing he is supposed to be happy. He asked himself whether he was proud of the result of this intimacy. She had told him,—she herself,—that she had “caught him,” meaning thereby that he had been taken as a rabbit with a snare or a fish with a baited hook. If it had been so, surely she would not herself have said so. And yet he was aware how common it is for a delinquent to cover his own delinquency by declaring it. “Of course I am idle,” says the idle one, escaping the disgrace of his idleness by his honesty. “I have caught you!” There is something soothing to the vanity in such a declaration from a pretty woman. That she should have wished to catch you is something;—something that the net should itself be so pleasant, with its silken meshes! But the declaration may not the less be true and the fact unpleasant. In the matter of matrimony a man does not wish to be caught; and Caldigate, fond as he was of her, acknowledged that what she had said was true.

He leant back in a corner that was made by the hatchway, and endeavoured to think over his life and prospects. If this were a true engagement, then must he cease altogether to think of Hester Bolton. Then

must that dream be abandoned. It is of no use to the most fervid imagination to have a castle projected in Spain from which all possible foundation has been taken away. In his dreams of life a man should never dream that which is altogether impossible. There had been something in the thought of Hester Bolton which had taken him back from the roughnesses of his new life, from the doubtful respectability of Mrs. Smith, from the squalor of the second-class, from the whisky-laden snores of Dick Shand, to a sweeter, brighter, cleaner world. Till this engagement had been absolutely spoken he could still indulge in that romance, distant and unreal as it was. But now,—now it seemed to be brought in upon him very forcibly that he must rid his thoughts of Hester Bolton,—or else rid his life of Mrs. Smith.

But he was engaged to marry Mrs. Smith. Then he got up, and walked backwards and forwards along the deck, asking himself whether this could really be the truth? Was he bound to this woman for his life? And if so, had he done a thing of which he already repented himself? He tried to persuade himself that she was admirably fitted for the life which he was fated to lead. She was handsome, intellectual, a most delightful companion, and yet capable of enduring the hardships of an adventurous, uncertain career. Ought he not to think himself peculiarly lucky in having found for himself so eligible a companion? But there is something so solemn, so sacred, in the name of wife. A man brought up among soft things is so imbued with the feeling that his wife should be something better, cleaner, sweeter, holier than himself, that he could not but be awe-struck when he thought that he was bound to marry this all but nameless widow of some drunken

player,—this woman who, among other women, had been thought unfit for all companionship!

But things arrange themselves. How probable it was that he would never be married to her. After all, this might be but an incident, and not an unpleasant incident, in his life. He had had his amusement out of it, and she had had hers. Perhaps they would part to meet no more. But when he thought that there might be comfort in this direction, he felt that he was a scoundrel for thinking so.

“And this is to say good-bye?” ’Twas thus she greeted him again that night. “Good-bye——”

“Good-bye, my love.”

“My love! my love! And now remember this; my address will be, Post-office, Melbourne. It will be for you to write to me. You will not hear from me unless you do. Indeed I shall know nothing of you. Let me have a line before a month is over.” This he promised, and then they parted.

At break of day on the following morning the Goldfinder rode over the Rip into Hobson’s Bay. There were still four hours before the ship lay at her moorings; but during all that time Mrs. Smith was not seen by Caldigate. As he got into the boat which took him and Shand from the ship to the pier at Sandridge she kissed her hand to him over the side of the vessel. Before eleven o’clock Dick Shand and his companion were comfortably put up at the Miners’ Home in Flinders Lane.

CHAPTER IX

NOBBLE

DURING the two days which Dick and Caldigate spent together in Melbourne Mrs. Smith's name was not mentioned between them. They were particularly civil each to the other and went to work together, making arrangements at a bank as to their money, taking their places, despatching their luggage, and sorting their belongings as though there had been no such woman as Mrs. Smith on board the Goldfinder. Dick, though he had been inclined to grumble when his mystery had been taken out of his hands,—who had, of course, been jealous when he saw that the lady had discarded her old hat and put on new ribbons, not for him, but for another,—was too conscious of the desolation to which he would be subjected by quarrelling with his friend. He felt himself unable to go alone, and was therefore willing that the bygoners of the ship should be bygoners. Caldigate, on the other hand, acknowledged to himself that he owed some reparation to his companion. Of course he had not bound himself to any special mode of life;—but had he, in his present condition, allied himself more closely to Mrs. Smith, he would, to some extent, have thrown Dick over. And then, as soon as he was on shore, he did feel somewhat ashamed of himself in regard to Mrs. Smith. Was it not manifest that any closer alliance, let the alliance be what it might, must be ruinous to him? As it was, had he not

made an absolute fool of himself with Mrs. Smith? Had he not got himself already into a mess from which there was no escape? Of course he must write to her when the month was over. The very weight of his thoughts on this matter made him tamer with Dick and more observant than he would otherwise have been.

They were during those two days frequently about the town, looking at the various streets and buildings, at the banks and churches and gardens,—as is usual with young men when they visit a new town; but, during it all, Caldigate's mind was more intent on Mrs. Smith than he was on the sights of the place. Melbourne is not so big but that she might easily have thrown herself in his way had she pleased. Strangers residing in such a town are almost sure to see each other before twenty-four hours are gone. But Mrs. Smith was not seen. Two or three times he went up and down Collins Street alone, without his friend, not wishing to see her,—aware that he had better not see her,—but made restless by a nervous feeling that he ought to wish to see her, that he should, at any rate, not keep out of her way. But Mrs. Smith did not show herself. Whatever might be her future views, she did not now take steps to present herself to him. "I shall be so much the more bound to present myself to her," he said to himself. "But perhaps she knows all that," he added in the same soliloquy.

On the Wednesday morning they left Melbourne by the 6 A. M. train for Albury, which latter place they reached the same day, about 2 P. M., having then crossed the Murray River, and passed into the colony of New South Wales. Here they stayed but a few hours and then went on by coach on their journey to Nobble. From one wretched vehicle they were handed on to

another, never stopping anywhere long enough to go to bed,—three hours at one wretched place and five at another,—travelling at the rate of six miles an hour, bumping through the mud and slush of the bush roads, and still going on for three days and three nights. This was roughing it indeed. Even Dick complained, and said that, of all the torments prepared for wicked mortals on earth, this Australian coaching was the worst. They went through Wagga-Wagga and Murrumburra, and other places with similar names, till at last they were told that they had reached Nobble. Nobble they thought was the foulest place which they had ever seen. It was a gold-digging town, as such places are called, and had been built with great rapidity to supply the necessities of adjacent miners. It was constructed altogether of wood, but no two houses had been constructed alike. They generally had gable ends opening on to the street, but were so different in breadth, altitude, and form, that it was easy to see that each enterprising proprietor had been his own architect. But they were all alike in having enormous advertisement-boards, some high, some broad, some sloping, on which were declared the merits of the tradesmen who administered within to the wants of mining humanity. And they had generally assumed most singular names for themselves: “The Old-stick-in-the-Mud Soft Goods Store,” “The Polyuka Stout Depot,” “Number Nine Flour Mills,” and so on,—all of which were very unintelligible to our friends till they learned that these were the names belonging to certain gold-mining claims which had been opened in the neighbourhood of Nobble. The street itself was almost more perilous to vehicles than the slush of the forest-tracks, so deep were the holes and so uncertain the surface. When Caldigate informed the

driver that they wanted to be taken as far as Henniker's hotel, the man said that he had given up going so far as that for the last two months, the journey being too perilous. So they shouldered their portmanteaus and struggled forth down the street. Here and there a short bit of wooden causeway, perhaps for the length of three houses, would assist them; and then, again, they would have to descend into the roadway and plunge along through the mud.

"It is not quite as nice walking as the old Quad at Trinity," said Caldigate.

"It is the beastliest hole I ever put my foot in since I was born," said Dick, who had just stumbled and nearly came to the ground with his burden. "They told us that Nobble was a fine town."

Henniker's hotel was a long, low wooden shanty, divided into various very small partitions by thin planks, in most of which two or more dirty-looking beds had been packed very closely. But between these little compartments there was a long chamber containing a long and very dirty table, and two long benches. Here were sitting a crowd of miners, drinking, when our friends were ushered in through the bar or counter which faced to the street. At the bar they were received by a dirty old woman who said that she was Mrs. Henniker. Then they were told, while the convivial crowd were looking on and listening, that they could have the use of one of the partitions and their "grub" for 7s. 6d. a day each. When they asked for a partition apiece, they were told that if they didn't like what was offered to them they might go elsewhere. Upon that they agreed to Mrs. Henniker's terms, and sitting down on one of the benches looked desolately into each other's faces.

Yes;—it was different from Trinity College, different from Babington, very different even from the less luxurious comfort of the house at Pollington. The deck, even the second-class cabin, of the Goldfinder had been better than this. And then they had no friend, not even an acquaintance, within some hundred miles. The men around them were not uncivil. Australian miners never are so. But they were inquisitive, familiar, and with their half-drunken good-humour, almost repulsive. It was about noon when our friends reached Henniker's, and they were told that there would be dinner at one. There was always "grub" at one, and "grub" at seven, and "grub" at eight in the morning. So one of the men informed them. The same gentleman hoped that the strangers were not very particular, as the "grub," though plentiful, was apt to be rough of its kind.

"You'll have it a deal worse before you've done if you're going on to Ahalala," said another. Then Caldigate said that they did intend to go on to Ahalala. "We're going to have a spell at gold-digging," said he. What was the use of making any secret of the matter. "We knowed that ready enough," said one of the men. "Chaps like you don't come much to Nobble for nothing else. Have you got any money to start with?"

"A few half-crowns," said Dick, cautiously.

"Half-crowns don't go very far here, my mate. If you can spend four or five pounds a week each for the next month, so as to get help till you know where you are, it may be you'll turn up gold at Ahalala;—but if not, you'd better go elsewhere. You needn't be afraid. We ain't a-going to rob you of nothing."

"Nor yet we don't want nothing to drink," said another.

"Speak for yourself, Jack," said a third. "But come;—as those are regular new chums, I don't care if I shout for the lot myself." Then the dirty old woman was summoned, and everybody had whisky all round. When that was done, another generous man came to the front, and there was more whisky, till Caldigate was frightened as to the result.

Evil might have come from it, had not the old woman opportunely brought the "grub" into the room. This she chucked down on the table in such a way that the grease out of the dish splattered itself all around. There was no tablecloth, nor had any preparation been made; but in the middle of the table there was a heap of dirty knives and forks, with which the men at once armed themselves; and each took a plate out of a heap that had been placed on a shelf against the wall. Caldigate and Shand, when they saw how the matter was to be arranged, did as the other men. The "grub" consisted of an enormous lump of boiled beef, and a bowl of potatoes, which was moderate enough in size considering that there were in all about a dozen men to be fed. But there was meat enough for double the number, and bread in plenty, but so ill-made as to be rejected by most of the men. The potatoes were evidently the luxury; and, guided by that feeling, the man who had told the strangers that they need not be afraid of being robbed, at once selected six out of the bowl, and deposited three each before Dick and Caldigate. He helped the others all round to one each, and then was left without any for himself. "I don't care a damn for that sort of tucker," he said, as though he despised potatoes from the bottom of his heart. Of all the crew he was the dirtiest, and was certainly half drunk. Another man holloed to "Mother Henniker" for

pickles; but Mother Henniker, without leaving her seat at the bar, told them to "pickle themselves." Whereupon one of the party, making some allusion to Jack Brien's swag,—Jack Brien being absent at the moment,—rose from his seat and undid a great roll lying in one of the corners. Every miner has his swag,—consisting of a large blanket which is rolled up, and contains all his personal luggage. Out of Jack Brien's swag were extracted two large square bottles of pickles. These were straightway divided among the men, care being taken that Dick and Caldigate should have ample shares. Then every man helped himself to beef, as much as he would, passing the dish round from one to the other. When the meal was half finished, Mrs. Henniker brought in an enormous jorum of tea, which she served out to all the guests in tin pannikins, giving to every man a fixed and ample allowance of brown sugar, without at all consulting him. Milk there was none. In the midst of this Jack Brien came in, and with a clamour of mirth the empty pickle jars were shown him. Jack, who was a silent man, and somewhat melancholy, merely shook his head and ate his beef. It may be presumed that he was fond of pickles, having taken so much trouble to provide them; but he said not a word of the injury to which he had been subjected.

"Them's a-going to Ahalala, Jack," said the distributor of the potatoes, nodding his head to indicate the two new adventurers.

"Then they're a-going to the most infernal, mean, —, — break-heartedest place as God Almighty ever put on this 'arth for the perplexment of poor unfortunate — — miners." This was Jack Brien's eloquence, and his description of Ahalala. Before this he had not spoken a word, nor did he speak again till he

had consumed three or four pounds of beef, and had swallowed two pannikins of tea. Then he repeated his speech: "There isn't so — — an infernal, mean, break-hearted a place as Ahalala,—not nowhere; no, not nowhere. And so them chums 'll find for themselves if they go there." Then his neighbour whispered into Caldigate's ear that Jack had gone to Ahalala with fifty sovereigns in his pocket, and that he wasn't now worth a red cent.

"But there is gold there?" asked Caldigate.

"It's my belief there's gold pretty much everywhere, and you may find it, or you mayn't. That's where it is;—and the mayn'ts are a deal oftener turning up than the mays."

"A man can get work for wages," suggested Dick.

"Wages! What's the use of that? A man as knows mining can earn wages. But Ahalala ain't a place for wages. If you want wages go to one of the old-fashioned places;—Bendigo, or the like of that. I've worked for wages, but what comes of it? A man goes to Ahalala because he wants to run his chance, and get a big haul. It's every one on his own bottom pretty much at Ahalala."

"Wages be——!" said Jack Brien, rising from the seat and hitching up his trousers as he left the room. It was very evident that Jack Brien was a gambler.

After dinner there was a smoke, and after the smoke Dick Shand "shouted" for the company. Dick had quite learned by this time the mystery of shouting. When one man "stands" drink all round, he shouts; and then it is no more than reciprocal that another man should do the same. And, in this way, when the reciprocal feeling is spread over a good many drinkers, a good deal of liquor is consumed.

While Dick Shand's shout was being consumed, Caldigate asked one of his new friends where Mr. Crinkett lived. Was Mr. Crinkett known in Nobble? It seemed that Crinkett was very well known in Nobble indeed. If anybody had done well at Nobble, Mr. Crinkett had done well. He was the "swell" of the place. This informant did not think that Mr. Crinkett had himself gone very deep at Ahalala. Mr. Crinkett had risen high enough in his profession to be able to achieve more certainty than could be found at such a place as Ahalala. By this time they were on the road to Mr. Crinkett's house, this new friend having undertaken to show them the way.

"He can put you up to a thing or two, if he likes," said the new friend. "Perhaps he's a pal of yours?"

Caldigate explained that he had never seen Mr. Crinkett, but that he had come to Nobble armed with a letter from a gentleman in England who had once been concerned in gold-digging.

"He's a civil enough gent, is Crinkett," said the miner;—"but he do like making money. They say of him there's nothing he wouldn't sell,—not even his grandmother's bones. I like trade, myself," added the miner;—"but some of 'em's too sharp. That's where Crinkett lives. He's a swell; ain't he?"

They had walked about half a mile from the town, turning down a lane at the back of the house, and had made their way through yawning pit-holes and heaps of dirt and pools of yellow water,—where everything was disorderly and apparently deserted,—till they came to a cluster of heaps so large as to look like little hills; and here there were signs of mining vitality. On their way they had not come across a single shred of vegetation, though here and there stood the bare trunks of a

few dead and headless trees, the ghosts of the forest which had occupied the place six or seven years previously. On the tops of these artificial hills there were sundry rickety-looking erections, and around them were troughs and sheds and rude water-works. These, as the miner explained, were the outward and visible signs of the world famous "Old-Stick-in-the-Mud" claim, which was now giving two ounces of gold to the ton of quartz, and which was at present the exclusive property of Mr. Crinkett, who had bought out the tribute shareholders and was working the thing altogether on his own bottom. As they ascended one of those mounds of upcast stones and rubble, they could see on the other side the crushing mills, and the engine house, and could hear the thud, thud, thud of the great iron hammers as they fell on the quartz,—and then, close beyond, but still among the hillocks, and surrounded on all sides by the dirt and filth of the mining operations, was Mr. Crinkett's mansion. "And there's his very self a-standing at the gate a-counting how many times the hammer falls a minute, and how much gold is a-coming from every blow as it falls." With this little observation as to Mr. Crinkett's personal character, the miner made his way back to his companions.

CHAPTER X

POLYEUKA HALL

THE house which they saw certainly surprised them much, and seemed to justify the assertion just before made to them that Mr. Crinkett was a swell. It was marvellous that any man should have contemplated the building of such a mansion in a place so little attractive, with so many houses within view. The house and little attempted garden, together with the stables and appurtenances, may have occupied half an acre. All around it were those hideous signs of mining operations which makes a country rich in metals look as though the devil had walked over it, dragging behind him an enormous rake. There was not a blade of grass to be seen. As far as the eye could reach there stood those ghost-like skeletons of trees in all spots where the soil had not been turned up; but on none of them was there a leaf left, or even a branch. Everywhere the ground was thrown about in hideous uncovered hillocks, all of which seemed to have been deserted, except those in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr. Crinkett's house. But close around him one could see wheels turning and long ropes moving, and water running in little wooden conduits, all of which were signs of the activity going on under ground. And then there was a never-ceasing thud, thud, thud of the crushing mill, which from twelve o'clock on Sunday night to twelve o'clock on Saturday night, never paused for a moment, having the effect on that vacant day, of creating a painful

strain of silence upon the ears of those who were compelled to remain on the spot during the unoccupied time. It was said that in Mr. Crinkett's mansion every sleeper would wake from his sleep as soon as the engine was stopped, disturbed by the unwonted quiescence.

But the house which had been built in this unpromising spot was quite entitled to be called a mansion. It was of red brick, three storeys high, with white stone facings to all the windows and all the corners which glittered uncomfortably in the hot sun. There was a sweep up to it, the road having been made from the débris of the stone out of which the gold had been crushed; but though there was the sweep up to the door carefully made for the length of a few dozen yards, there was nothing that could be called a road outside, though there were tracks here and there through the hillocks, along which the waggons employed about the place struggled through the mud. The house itself was built with a large hall in the middle, and three large windows on each side. On the floor there were four large rooms, with kitchens opening out behind, and above there were, of course, chambers in proportion; and in the little garden there was a pond and a big bath-house, and there were coach-houses and stables;—so that it was quite a mansion. It was called Polyeuca Hall, because while it was being built Mr. Crinkett was drawing large gains from the Polyeuca mine, about three miles distant on the other side of Nobble. For the building of his mansion on this special site, no one could imagine any other reason than that love which a brave man has of overcoming difficulties. To endeavour to create a paradise in such a Pandemonium required all the energies of a Crinkett. Whether or not he had been successful depended of course on his own idiosyncrasies. He had a

wife who, it is to be hoped, liked her residence. They had no children, and he spent the greater part of his time away in other mining districts in which he had ventures. When thus absent, he would live as Jack Brien and his friends were living at Mrs. Henniker's, and was supposed to enjoy the ease of his inn more thoroughly than he did the constraint of his grand establishment.

At the present moment he was at home, and was standing at the gate of his domain all alone, with a pipe in his mouth,—perhaps listening, as the men had said, to the noise of his own crushing machine. He was dressed in black, with a chimney-pot on his head,—and certainly did not look like a miner, though he looked as little like a gentleman. Our friends were in what they conceived to be proper miners' costume, but Mr. Crinkett knew at a glance that there was something uncommon about them. As they approached he did not attempt to open the gate, but awaited them, looking over the top of it from the inside. "Well, my mates, what can I do for you?" he said, still remaining on his side, and apparently intending that they should remain on theirs. Then Caldigate brought forth his letter, and handed it to the owner of the place across the top of the gate. "I think Mr. Jones wrote to you about us before," said Caldigate.

Crinkett read the letter very deliberately. Perhaps he required time to meditate what his conduct should be. Perhaps he was not quick at reading written letters. But at last he got to the end of the very few words which the note contained. "Jones!" he said, "Jones wasn't much account when he was out here."

"We don't know a great deal about him," said Dick.

"But when he heard that we were coming, he offered

us a letter to you," said Caldigate. "I believe him to be an honest man."

"Honest! Well, yes; I daresay he's honest enough. He never robbed me of nothing. And shall I tell you why? Because I know how to take care that he don't, nor yet nobody else." As he said this, he looked at them as though he intended that they were included among the numbers against whom he was perfectly on his guard.

"That's the way to live," said Dick.

"That's the way I live, my friend. He did write before. I remember saying to myself what a pair of simpletons you must be if you was thinking of going to Ahalala."

"We do think of going there," said Caldigate.

"The road's open to you. Nobody won't prevent you. You can get beef and mutton there, and damper, and tea no doubt, and what they call brandy, as long as you've got the money to pay for it. One won't say anything about what price they'll charge you. Have you got any money?" Then Caldigate made a lengthened speech, in which he explained so much of their circumstances as seemed necessary. He did not name the exact sum which had been left at the bank in Melbourne, but he did make Mr. Crinkett understand that they were not paupers. They were anxious to do something in the way of mining, and particularly anxious to make money. But they did not quite know how to begin. Could he give them a hint? They meant to work with their own hands, but perhaps it might be well for them at first to hire the services of someone to set them a-going.

Crinkett listened very patiently, still maintaining his position on his own side of the gate. Then he spoke

words of such wisdom as was in him. "Ahalala is just the place to ease you of a little money. Mind I tell you. Gold! of course there's been gold to be got there. But what's been the cost of it? What's been the return? If sixteen hundred men, among 'em, can sell fifteen hundred pounds worth of gold a week, how is each man to have twenty shillings on Saturday night? That's about what it is at Ahalala. Of course there's gold. And where there's gold chucked about in that way, just on the surface, one gets it and ten don't. Who is to say you mayn't be the one. As to hiring a man to show you the way,—you can hire a dozen. As long as you'll pay 'em ten shilling a day to loaf about, you may have men enough. But whether they'll show you the way to anything except the liquor store, that's another thing. Now shall I tell you what you two gents had better do?" Dick declared that the two gents would be very much obliged to him if he would take that trouble. "Of course you've heard of the 'Old-Stick-in-the-Mud?'" Dick told him that they had heard of that very successful mining enterprise since their arrival at Nobble. "You ask on the verandah at Melbourne, or at Ballarat, or at Sydney. If they don't tell you about it, my name's not Crinkett. You put your money, what you've got, into ten shilling shares. I'll accommodate you, as you're friends of Jones, with any reasonable number. We're getting two ounces to the ton. The books 'll show you that."

"We thought you'd purchased out all the shareholders," said Caldigate.

"So I did, and now I'm redividing it. I'd rather have a company. It's pleasanter. If you can put in a couple of thousand pounds or so between you, you can travel about and see the country, and your money 'll

be working for you all the time. Did you ever see a gold mine?"

They owned that they never yet had been a yard below ground. Then he opened his gate preparatory to taking them down the "Old-Stick-in-the-Mud," and brought them with him into one of the front rooms. It was a large parlour, only half furnished, not yet papered, without a carpet, in which it appeared that Mr. Crinkett kept his own belongings. Here he divested himself of his black clothes and put on a suit of miner's garments,—real miner's garments, very dirty, with a slouch hat, on the top of which there was a lump of mud in which to stick a candle-end. Anyone learned in the matter would immediately have known the real miner. "Now if you like to see a mine we will go down, and then you can do as you like about your money."

They started forth, Crinkett leading the way, and entered the engine-house. As they went he said not a word, being aware that gold, gold that they could see with their eyes in its raw condition, would tempt them more surely than all his eloquence. In the engine-house the three of them got into a box or truck that was suspended over the mouth of a deep shaft, and soon found themselves descending through the bowels of the earth. They went down about four hundred feet, and as they were reaching the bottom Crinkett remarked that it was "a goodish deep hole all to belong to one man." "Yes," he added as Caldigate extricated himself from the truck, "and there's a precious lot more gold to come out of it yet, I can tell you."

In all the sights to be seen about the world there is no sight in which there is less to be seen than in a gold-mine. The two young men were made to follow

their conductor along a very dirty underground gallery for about a quarter of a mile, and then they came to four men working with picks in a rough sort of chamber, and four others driving holes in the walls. They were simply picking down the rock, in doing which they were assisted by gunpowder. With keen eyes Crinkett searched along the roofs and sides, and at last showed to his companions one or two little specks which he pronounced to be gold. "When it shows itself like that all about you may guess whether it's a paying concern! Two ounces to the ton, my boys!" As Dick and Caldigate hitherto knew nothing about ounces and tons in reference to gold, and as they had heard of nuggets, and lumps of gold nearly as big as their fist, they were not much exalted by what they saw down the "Old-Stick-in-the-Mud." Nor did they like the darkness and dampness and dirt and dreariness of the place. They had both resolved to work, as they had often said, with their own hands;—but in thinking over it their imagination had not pictured to them so uncomfortable a workshop as this. When they had returned to the light, the owner of the place took them through the crushing mill attached, showed them the stone or mulloch, as it was thrust into the jaws of the devouring animal, and then brought them in triumph round to the place where the gold was eliminated from the débris of mud and water. The gold did not seem to them to be very much; but still there it was, "Two ounces to the ton, my boys," said Crinkett, as he brought them back to his house. "You'll find that a 10s. share'll give you about 6d. a month. That's about 60 per cent, I guess. You can have your money monthly. What comes out of that there mine in a March, you can have in a April, and so on. There ain't

nothing like it anywhere else,—not as I knows on. And instead of working your hearts out, you can be just amusing yourselves about the country. Don't go to Ahalala;—unless it is for dropping your money. If that's what you want I won't say but Ahalala is as good a place as you'll find in the colony." Then he brought a bottle of whisky out of a cupboard, and treated them to a glass of grog apiece. Beyond that his hospitality did not go.

Dick looked as though he liked the idea of having a venture in the "Old-Stick-in-the-Mud." Caldigate, without actually disbelieving all that had been said to him, did not relish the proposal. It was not the kind of thing which they had intended. After they had learned their trade as miners it might be very well for them to have shares in some established concern;—but in that case he would wish to be one of the managers himself, and not to trust everything to any Crinkett, however honest. That suggestion of travelling about and amusing themselves did not commend itself to him. New South Wales might, he thought, be a good country for work, but did not seem to offer much amusement beyond sheer idleness, and brandy-and-water.

"I rather think we should like to do a little in the rough first," he said.

"A very little 'll go a long way with you, I'm thinking."

"I don't see that at all," said Dick, stoutly.

"You go down there and take one of them picks in your hand for a week,—eight hours at a time, with five minutes' spell allowed for a smoke, and see how you'll feel at the end of the week."

"We'll try it on, if you'll give us 10s. a day for the week," said Caldigate, rubbing his hands together.

"Very like. One doesn't drink cham—paign because it's better nor anything else. A nobbler of brandy's worth ten of it. It's the glory of out-facing the swells at their own game. There was a chap over in the other colony shod his horse with gold,—and he had to go shepherding afterwards for thirty pounds a year and his grub. But it's something for him to have ridden a horse with gold shoes. You've never seen a bucketful of cham—paign in the old country?"

When both Dick and Caldigate had owned that they had never encountered luxury so superabundant, and had discussed the matter in various shapes,—asking whether the bucket had been emptied, and other questions of the same nature,—Caldigate inquired of his friend whether he knew Mick Maggott?

"Mick Maggott!" said the man jumping up to his feet. "Who wants Mick Maggott?" Then Caldigate explained the recommendation which Mr. Crinkett had made. "Well;—I'm darned;—Mick Maggott? I'm Mick Maggott, myself."

Before the evening was over an arrangement had been made between the parties, and had even been written on paper and signed by all the three. Mick on the morrow was to proceed to Ahalala with his new comrades, and was to remain with them for a month, assisting them in all their views; and for this he was to receive ten shillings a day. But, in the event of his getting drunk, he was to be liable to dismissal at once. Mick pleaded hard for one bout of drinking during the month;—but when Dick explained that one bout might last for the entire time, he acknowledged that the objection was reasonable and assented to the terms proposed.

CHAPTER XI

AHALALA

It was all settled that night, and some necessary purchases made. Ahalala was twenty-three miles from Nobble, and a coach had been established through the bush for the benefit of miners going to the diggings;—but Mick was of opinion that miners ought to walk, with their swag on their back, when the distance was not more than forty miles. “You look so foolish getting out of one of them rattle-trap coaches,” he said, “and everybody axing whether you’re going to pick for yourself or buy a share in a claim. I’m all for walking,—if it ain’t beneath you.” They declared themselves quite ready to walk, and under Mick’s guidance they went out and bought two large red blankets and two pannikins. Mick declared that if they went without swags on their backs and pannikins attached to their swags, they would be regarded with evil eyes by all who saw them. There were some words about the portmanteaus. Mick proposed that they should be left for the entire month in the charge of Mrs. Henniker, and, when this was pronounced impossible, he was for a while disposed to be off the bargain. Caldigate declared that, with all his ambition to be a miner, he must have a change of shirts. Then Mick pointed to the swag. Couldn’t he put another shirt into the swag? It was at last settled that one portmanteau should be sent by the coach, and one left in the charge of Mrs. Hen-

niker. "Them sort of traps ain't never any good, in my mind," said Mick. "It's unmanly, having all them togs. I like a wash as well as any man,—trousers, jersey, drawers, and all. I'm always at 'em when I get a place for a rinse by the side of a creek. But when my things are so gone that they won't hang on comfortable any longer, I chucks 'em away and buys more. Two jerseys is good, and two drawers is good, because of wet. Boots is awkward, and I allays does with one pair. Some have two, and ties 'em on with the pannikin. But it ain't ship-shape. Them's my ideas, and I've been at it these nine years. You'll come to the same."

The three started the next morning at six, duly invested with their swags. Before they went they found Mrs. Henniker up, with hot tea, boiled beef, and damper. "Just one drop at starting,—for the good of the house," said Mick, apologetically. Whereupon the whisky was brought, and Mick insisted on "shouting" for it out of his own pocket.

They had hardly gone a mile out of Nobble before Maggott started a little difficulty,—merely for the purpose of solving it with a master's hand. "There ain't to be no misters among us, you know."

"Certainly not," said Caldigate.

"My name's Mick. This chap's name's Dick. I didn't exactly catch your'n. I suppose you've been kursened."

"Yes;—they christened me John."

"Ain't it never been Jack with you?"

"I don't think it ever was."

"John! It do sound lackadaisical. What I call womanish. But perhaps it's for the better. We have such a lot of Jacks. There's dirty Jack, and Jack the

nigger, and Jack Misery,—that's poor Jack Brien;—and a lot more. Perhaps you wouldn't like not another name of that sort."

"Well; no,—unless it's necessary."

"There ain't another John about the place, as I know. I never knew a John down a mine,—never. We'll try it, anyhow."

And so that was settled. As it happened, though Dick Shand had always been Dick to his friend, Caldigate had never, as yet, been either John or Jack to Dick Shand. There are men who fall into the way of being called by their Christian names, and others who never hear them except from their own family. But before the day was out, Caldigate had become John to both his companions. "It don't sound as it ought to do;—not yet," said Mick, after he had tried it about a dozen times in five minutes.

Before the day was over it was clear that Mick Maggott had assumed the mastery. When three men start on an enterprise together, one man must be "boss." Let the republic be as few as it may one man must be president. And as Mick knew what he was about, he assumed the situation easily. The fact that he was to receive wages from the others had no bearing on the subject at all. Before they got to Ahalala, Caldigate had begun to appreciate all this, and to understand in part what they would have to do during this month, and how they would have to live. It was proposed that they should at once fix on a spot,—“peg out a claim,” on some unoccupied piece of ground, buy for themselves a small tent,—of which they were assured that they would find many for sale,—and then begin to sink a hole. When they entered Ahalala, Caldigate was surprised to find that Mick was the most tired of the three.

It is always so. The man who has laboured from his youth upwards can endure with his arms. It is he who has had leisure to shoot, to play cricket, to climb up mountains, and to handle a racket, that can walk. "Darned if you ain't better stuff than I took you for," said Mick, as the three let the swags down from their backs on the verandah of Ridley's hotel at Ahalala.

Ahalala was a very different place from Nobble,—made Nobble seem to be almost a compact and prosperous city. At Nobble there was at any rate a street. But at Ahalala everything was straggling. The houses, such as they were, stood here and there about the place, while a great part of the population lived under canvas. And then Ahalala was decidedly in the forest. The trees around had not yet been altogether killed, nor had they been cut down in sufficient numbers to divest the place of its forest appearance. Ahalala was leafy, and therefore though much less regular, also less hideous than Nobble. When Dick first made tender inquiry as to the comforts of an hotel, he was assured that there were at least a couple of dozen. But the place was bewildering. There seemed to be no beginning to it and no end. There were many tracks about here and there,—but nothing which could be called a road. The number of holes was infinite,—each hole covered by a rough windlass used for taking out the dirt, which was thrown loosely anywhere round the aperture. Here and there were to be seen little red flags stuck upon the end of poles. These indicated, as Mick informed them, those fortunate adventures in which gold had been found. At those very much more numerous hillocks which showed no red flag, the labourers were hitherto labouring in vain. There was a little tent generally near to each hillock in which the miners slept, packed nearly as close

as sheep in a fold. As our party made its way through the midst of this new world to Ridley's hotel, our friend observed many a miner sitting at his evening meal. Each generally had a frying-pan between his legs, out of which he was helping himself to meat which he had cooked on the ashes just behind him. Sometimes two or three were sharing their provisions out of the same frying-pan; but as a rule each miner had his own, and each had it between his legs.

Before they had been at Ahalala twenty-four hours they also had their tent and their frying-pan and their fire, and had pegged out their claim, and were ready to commence operations on the morrow. It was soon manifest to Caldigate and Dick Shand that they would have been very much astray without a "boss" to direct them. Three or four hours had been passed in forming a judgment as to the spot on which they should commence to dig. And in making his choice Mick had been guided by many matters as to which our two adventurers were altogether ignorant. It might be that Mick was equally so; but he at any rate assumed some knowledge. He looked to the fall of the ground, the line in which the red flags were to be traced,—if any such line could be found,—and was possessed of a considerable amount of jargon as to topographical mining secrets. At last they found a spot, near a creek, surrounded by forest-trees, perhaps three hundred yards from the nearest adjacent claim, and, as Mick declared, in a direct line with three red flags. Here they determined to commence their operations. "I don't suppose we shall do any good," said Caldigate to Dick, "but we must make a beginning, if only for the sake of hardening our hands. We shall be learning something at the time even though we only shovel up so much mud."

For a fortnight they shovelled up the soil continuously without any golden effects, and, so far, without any feeling of disappointment. Mick had told them that if they found a speck at the end of three weeks they would be very fortunate. They had their windlass, and they worked in relays; one man at the bottom, one man at the wheel, and one man idle. In this way they kept up their work during eighteen hours of the day. Each man in this way worked twelve hours, and had twelve for sleeping, and cooking, and eating. Other occupation they had none. During the fortnight neither of them went any further distance from their claim than to the neighbouring shop. Mick often expressed his admiration at their continued industry, not understanding the spirit which will induce such young men as them to work, even when the work is agonising. And they were equally charmed with Mick's sobriety and loyalty. Not a word had been said as to hours of work,—and yet he was as constant to their long hours as though the venture was his own,—as though there was no question of wages.

“We ain't had a drop o' drink yet,” said Mick one night. “Ain't we a-holding off like Britons?” There was great triumph in his voice as he said this;—very great triumph, but, also, as Caldigate thought, a sound of longing also. They were now in their third week, and the word whisky had never been pronounced between them. At this moment, when Mick's triumphant ejaculation was uttered, they were all lying—in bed. It shall be called bed by way of compliment. They had bought a truss of straw, which Mick had declared to be altogether unnecessary and womanish, and over that was laid a white india-rubber sheet which Caldigate had brought with him from England. This, too, had

roused the miner's wrath. Nevertheless he condescended to lie upon it. This was their bed; and here they lay, each wrapped up in his blanket, Mick in the middle, with our two friends at the sides. Now it was not only on Mick's account, but quite as much in reference to Dick Shand, that Caldigate deprecated any reference to drink. The abstention hitherto had been marvellous. He himself would have gone daily to the store for a bottle of beer, but that he recognised the expediency of keeping them away from the place. He had heard that it was a peculiarity of the country that all labour was done without drink, even when it was done by determined drunkards. The drunkard would work for a month, and then drink for a month,—and then, after a time, would die. The drink almost always consisted of spirits of the worst description. It seemed to be recognised by the men that work and drink must be kept separate. But Mick's mind travelled away on this occasion from the little tent to the delights of Ridley's bar. "We haven't had a drop of drink yet," he said.

"We'll push through the month without it;—eh, old boy?" said Caldigate.

"What wouldn't I give for a pint of bitter beer?" said Shand.

"Or a bottle of Battleaxe between the three of us!" said Mick;—Battleaxe being the name of a certain brand of brandy.

"Not a drop till the month is over," said Caldigate, turning himself round in his blanket. Then there were whisperings between the other two men, of which he could only hear the hum.

On the next morning at six Caldigate and Dick Shand were at the hole together. It was Caldigate's

turn to work till noon, whereas Dick went off at nine, and Mick would come on from nine till three. At nine Mick did not make his appearance, and Dick declared his purpose of looking after him. Caldigate also threw down his tools, as he could not work alone, and went in search. The upshot of it was, that he did not see either of his companions again till he found them both very drunk at a drinking shop about two miles away from their claim, just before dusk!

This was terrible. He did at last succeed in bringing back his own friend to the tent, having, however, a sad task in doing so. But Mick Maggott would not be moved. He had his wits about him enough to swear that he cared for nothing. He was going to have a spree. Nobody had ever known him to be talked out of it when he had once set his mind upon it. He had set his mind upon it now, and he meant to have his whack. This was what he said of himself: "It ain't no good, John. It ain't no good at all, John. Don't you trouble yourself, John. I'm going to have it out, John, so I tell you." This he said, nodding his head about in a maudlin sort of way, and refusing to allow himself to be moved.

On the next day Dick Shand was sick, repentant, and idle. On the third day, he returned to his work,—working, however, with difficulty. After that, he fairly recovered himself, and the two Cambridge men went on resolutely at their hole. They soon found how hard it was not to go astray without their instructed mate. The sides of the shaft became crooked and uneven, and the windlass sometimes could not be made to work. But still they persevered, and went on by themselves for an entire week without a sign of gold. During this time various fruitless expeditions were made by both

the men in search of Maggott. He was still at the same drinking shop, but could not be induced to leave it. At last they found him with the incipient horrors of delirium tremens, and yet they could not get him away. The man who kept the place was quite used to delirium tremens, and thought nothing about it. When Caldigate tried a high moral tone everybody around him laughed at him.

They had been digging for a month, and still without a speck of gold, when, one morning early, Mick appeared in front of the tent. It was then about eight, and our friends had stopped their work to eat their breakfast. The poor man, without saying a word, came and crouched down before them;—not in shame,—not at all that; but apparently in an agony of sickness,—“I’ve had my bout,” he said.

“I don’t suppose you’re much the better for it,” replied Caldigate.

“No; I ain’t none the better. I thought it was all up with me yesterday. Oh, laws! I’ve had it heavy this time.”

“Why are you such a fool?”

“Well;—you see, John, some of us is born fools. I’m one of ’em. You needn’t tell me, ’cause I know all about it without any sermoning. Nobody don’t know it so well as I do! How should they? If you had my inside now,—and my head! Oh, laws!”

“Give it up, man.”

“That’s easy said;—as if I wouldn’t if I could. I haven’t got a blessed coin left to buy a bite of bread with,—and I couldn’t touch a morsel if I had ever so much. I’ll take my blanket and be off as soon as I can move.” All this time he had been crouching, but now he threw himself at length upon the ground.

Of course they did what they could for the poor wretch. They got him into the tent, and they made him swallow some tea. Then he slept; and in the course of the afternoon he had so far recovered as to be able to eat a bit of meat. Then, when his companions were at their work, he carefully packed up his swag, and fastening it on to his back, appeared by the side of the hole. "I'm come to bid you good-bye," he said.

"Where are you going, Mick?" asked Caldigate, climbing up out of the hole by the rope.

"I'm blessed if I know, but I'm off. You are getting that hole tarnation crooked."

The man was going without any allusion to the wages he had earned, or to the work that he had done. But then, in truth, he had not earned his wages, as he had broken his contract. He made no complaint, however, and no apology, but was prepared to start.

"That's all nonsense," said Dick, catching hold of him.

"You put your swag down," said Caldigate, also catching hold of the other shoulder.

"What am I to put my swag down for? I'm a-going back to Nobble. Crinkett'll give me work."

"You're not going to leave us in that way," said Dick.

"Stop and make the shaft straight," said Caldigate. The man looked irresolute. "Friends are not to part like that."

"Friends!" said the poor fellow. "Who'll be friends to such a beast as I be? But I'll stay out the month if you'll find me my grub."

"You shall have your grub and your money, too. Do you think we've forgotten the potatoes?"

“ — the potatoes,” said the man, bursting into tears. Then he chucked away his swag, and threw himself under the tent upon the straw. The next day he was making things as straight as he could down the shaft.

When they had been at work about five weeks there was a pole stuck into their heap of dirt, and on the top of the pole there was a little red flag flying. At about thirty feet from the surface, when they had already been obliged to insert transverse logs in the shaft to prevent the sides from falling in, they had come upon altogether a different kind of soil than the ordinary clay through which they had been working. There was a stratum of loose shingle or gravelly earth, running apparently in a sloping direction, taking the decline of the very slight hill on which their claim was situated. Mick, as soon as this was brought to light, became an altered man. The first bucket of this stuff that was pulled up was deposited by him separately, and he at once sat down to wash it. This he did in an open tin pan. Handful after handful he washed, shifting and teasing it about in the pan, and then he cast it out, always leaving some very small residuum. He was intent upon his business to a degree that Caldigate would have thought to be beyond the man's nature. With extreme patience he went on washing handful after handful all the day, while the other two pulled up fresh buckets of the same stuff. He would not pause to eat, or hardly to talk. At last there came a loud exclamation. “By — we've got it!” Then Dick and Caldigate, stooping down, were shown four or five little specks in the angle of the pan's bottom. Before the sun had set they had stuck up their little red flag, and a crowd of neighbours was standing round them asking questions as to their success.

CHAPTER XII

MADEMOISELLE CETTINI

AFTER three days of successful washing, when it became apparent that a shed must be built, and that, if possible, some further labour must be hired, Mick said that he must go. "I ain't earned nothing," he said, "because of that bout, and I ain't going to ask for nothing, but I can't stand this any longer. I hope you'll make your fortins." Then came the explanation. It was not possible, he said, that a regular miner, such as he was, should be a party to such a grand success without owning a share in it. He was quite aware that nothing belonged to him. He was working for wages and he had forfeited them. But he couldn't see the gold coming out under his hands in pailfuls and feel that none of it belonged to him. Then it was agreed that there should be no more talk of wages, and that each should have a third share in the concern. Very much was said on the matter of drink, in all of which Caldigate was clever enough to impose on his friend Dick the heavy responsibility of a mentor. A man who has once been induced to preach to another against a fault will feel himself somewhat constrained by his own sermons. Mick would make no promises; but declared his intention of trying very hard. "If anybody'd knock me down as soon as I goes a yard off the claim, that'd be best." And so they renewed their work, and at the end of six weeks from the commencement of their operations sold nine ounces of gold to the manager of the

little branch bank which had already established itself at Ahalala. These were hardly "pailfuls"; but gold is an article which adds fervour to the imagination and almost creates a power for romance.

Other matters, however, were not running smoothly with John Caldigate at this eventful time. To have found gold so soon after their arrival was no doubt a great triumph, and justified him in writing a long letter to his father, in which he explained what he had done, and declared that he looked forward to success with confidence. But still he was far from being at ease. He could not suffer himself to remain hidden at Ahalala without saying something of his whereabouts to Mrs. Smith. After what had happened between them he would be odious to himself if he omitted to keep the promise which he had made to her. And yet he would so fain have forgotten her,—or rather have wiped away from the reality of his past life that one episode, had it been possible. A month's separation had taught him to see how very silly he had been in regard to this woman,—and had also detracted much from those charms which had delighted him on board ship. She was pretty, she was clever, she had the knack of being a pleasant companion. But how much more than all these was wanted in a wife? And then he knew nothing about her. She might be, or have been, all that was disreputable. If he could not shake himself free from her, she would be a millstone round his neck. He was aware of all that, and as he thought of it he would think also of the face of Hester Bolton, and remember her form as she sat silent in the big house at Chester-ton. But nevertheless it was necessary that he should write to Mrs. Smith. He had promised that he would do so, and he must keep his word.

The name of the woman had not been mentioned between him and Dick Shand since they left the ship. Dick had been curious, but had been afraid to inquire, and had in his heart applauded the courage of the man who had thus been able to shake off at once a woman with whom he had amused himself. Caldigate himself was continually meditating as he worked with the windlass in his hand, or with his pick at the bottom of the hole, whether in conformity with the usages of the world he could not simply—drop her. Then he remembered the words which had passed between them on the subject, and he could not do it. He was as yet too young to be at the same time so wise and so hard. "I shall hold you as engaged to me," he had said, "and myself as engaged to you." And he remembered the tones of her voice as, with her last words, she had said to him, "My love, my love!" They had been very pleasant to him then, but now they were most unfortunate. They were unfortunate because there had been a power in them from which he was now unable to extricate himself.

Therefore, during one of those leisure periods in which Mick and Dick were at work, he wrote his letter, with the paper on his knees, squatting down just within his tent on a deal case which had contained boxes of sardines, bottles of pickles, and cans of jam. For now, in their prosperity, they had advanced somewhat beyond the simple plenty of the frying-pan. It was a difficult letter to write. Should it be ecstatic and loving, or cold and severe,—or light, and therefore false? "My own one, here I am. I have struck gold. Come to me and share it." That would have been ecstatic and loving. "'Tis a hard life this, and not fit for a woman's weakness. But it must be my life—and there-

forè let there be an end of all between us." That would have been cold and severe. "How are you, and what are you doing? Dick and I are shoving along. It isn't half as nice as on board ship. Hope to see you before long, and am yours,—just the same as ever." That would have been light and false,—keeping the word of promise to the ear but breaking it to the heart. He could not write either of these. He began by describing what they had done, and had completed two pages before he had said a word of their peculiar circumstances in regard to each other. He felt that his letter was running into mere gossip, and was not such as she would have a right to expect. If any letter were sent at all, there must be something more in it than all this. And so, after much thinking of it, he at last rushed, as it were, into hot words, and ended it as follows: "I have put off to the last what I have really got to say. Let me know what you are doing and what you wish,—and whether you love me. I have not as yet the power of offering you a home, but I trust that the time may come." These last words were false. He knew that they were false. But the falseness was not of a nature to cause him to be ashamed. It shames no man to swear that he loves a woman when he has ceased to love her;—but it does shame him to drop off from the love which he has promised. He balanced the matter in his mind for a while before he would send his letter. Then, getting up quickly, he rushed forth, and dropped it into the post-office box.

The very next day chance brought to Ahalala one who had been a passenger on board the Goldfinder; and the man, hearing of the success of Shand and Caldigate, came to see them. "Of course you know," said the man, "what your fellow-passenger is doing down at

Sydney?" Dick Shand, who was present, replied that they had heard nothing of any fellow-passenger. Caldigate understood at once to whom the allusion was made, and was silent. "Look here," said the man, bringing a newspaper out of his pocket, and pointing to a special advertisement. "What do you think that is?" The advertisement declared that Mademoiselle Cettini would, on such and such a night, sing a certain number of songs, and dance a certain number of dances, and perform a certain number of tableaux, at a certain theatre in Sydney. "That's your Mrs. Smith," said the man, turning to Caldigate.

"I am very glad she has got employment," said Caldigate; "but she is not my Mrs. Smith."

"We all thought that you and she were very thick."

"All the same I beg you to understand that she is not my Mrs. Smith," repeated Caldigate, endeavouring to appear unconcerned, but hardly able to conceal his anger.

Dancing dances, singing songs, and acting tableaux;—and all under the name of Mademoiselle Cettini! Nothing could be worse,—unless, indeed, it might be of service to him to know that she was earning her bread, and therefore not in distress, and earning it after a fashion of which he would be at liberty to express his disapproval. Nothing more was said at the time about Mrs. Smith, and the man went his way.

Ten days afterwards Caldigate, in the presence both of Mick and Dick, declared his purpose of going down to Sydney. "Our luggage must be looked after," said he;—"and I have a friend whom I want to see," he added, not choosing to lie. At this time all was going successfully with them. Mick Maggott lived in such a manner that no one near him would have thought

that he knew what whisky meant. His self-respect had returned to him, and he was manifestly "boss." There had come to be necessity for complicated woodwork below the surface, and he had shown himself to be a skilled miner. And it had come to pass that our two friends were as well assured of his honesty as of their own. He had been a veritable god-send to them,—and would remain so, could he be kept away from the drinking-shops.

"If you go away don't you think he'll break out?" Dick asked when they were alone together.

"I hope not. He seems to have been steadied by success. At any rate I must go."

"Is it to see—Mrs. Smith?" Dick as he asked the question put on his most serious face. He did not utter the name as though he were finding fault. The time that had passed had been sufficient to quench the unpleasantness of their difference on board ship. He was justified in asking his friend such a question, and Caldigate felt that it was so.

"I am."

"Don't you think, upon the whole——. I don't like to interfere, but upon my word the thing is so important."

"You think I had better not see her?"

"I do."

"And lie to her?"

"All is fair in love and war."

"That means that no faith is due to a woman. I cannot live by such a doctrine. I do not mind owning to you that I wish I could do as you bid me. I can't. I cannot be so false. I must go, old fellow; but I know all that you would say to me, and I will endeavour to escape honestly from this trouble." And so he went.

"Why Cettini?" he asked. But he smiled as he put the question. It was intended to be serious, but still he could not be hard upon her all at once.

"Why fifty thousand fools?"

"I don't understand."

"Supposing there to be fifty thousand people in Sydney,—as to which I know nothing. Or why ever so many million fools in London? If I called myself Mrs. Smith nobody would come and see me. If I called myself Madame Cettini, not nearly so many would come. You have got to inculcate into the minds of the people an idea that a pure, young girl is going to jump about for their diversion. They know it isn't so. But there must be a flavour of the idea. It isn't nice, but one has to live."

"Were you ever Cettini before?"

"Yes,—when I was on the stage as a girl." Then he thought he remembered that she had once told him some particular in regard to her early life, which was incompatible with this, unless indeed she had gone under more than one name before she was married. "I used as a child to dance and sing under that name."

"Was it your father's name?"

She smiled as she answered, "You want to discover all the little mean secrets of my life at once, and do not reflect that, in so far as they were mean, they are disagreeable subjects of conversation. I was not mean myself."

"I am sure of that."

"If you are sure of it is not that enough? Of course I have been among low people. If not, why should I have been a singer on the stage at so early an age, why a dancer, why should I have married such a one as Mr. Smith?"

"I do not know of what sort he was," said Caldigate.

"This is not the time to ask, when you have just come to see me;—when I am so delighted to see you! Oh, it is such a pleasure! I have not had a nice word spoken to me since I left the Goldfinder. Come and take a walk in the gardens? Nobody knows me off the stage yet, and nobody knows you. So we can do just as we like. Come and tell me about the gold."

He did go, and did tell her about the gold, and before he had been with her an hour, sitting about on the benches in that loveliest of all places, the public gardens at Sydney, he was almost happy with her. It was now late in the autumn, in May; but the end of the autumn in Sydney is the most charming time of the year. He spent the whole day with her, dining with her in her lodgings at five in order that he might take her to the theatre at seven. She had said a great deal to him about her performances, declaring that he would find them to be neither vulgar nor disagreeable. She told him that she had no friend in Sydney, but that she had been able to get an engagement for a fortnight at Melbourne, and had been very shortly afterwards pressed to come on to Sydney. She listened not only with patience, but apparently with the greatest pleasure, to all that he could tell her of Dick Shand, and Mr. Crinkett, and Mick Maggott, arousing herself quite to enthusiasm when he came to the finding of the gold. But there was not a word said the whole day as to their future combined prospects. Nor was there any more outspoken allusion to loves and darlings, or any repetition of that throwing herself into his arms. For once it was natural. If she were wanted thus again, the

action must be his,—not hers. She was clever enough to know that.

“What do you think of it?” she said, when he waited to take her home.

“It is the only good dancing I ever saw in my life. But——”

“Well!”

“I will tell you to-morrow.”

“Tell me whatever you think and you will see that I will attend to you. Come about eleven,—not sooner, as I shall not be dressed. Now, good-night.”

CHAPTER XIII

COMING BACK

THE letter which Caldigate wrote to his father from Ahalala, telling him of the discovery of gold upon their claim, contained the first tidings which reached Folking of the wanderer, and that was not received till seven or eight months had passed by since he left the place. The old Squire, during that time, had lived a very solitary life. In regard to his nephew, whom he had declared his purpose of partially adopting, he had expressed himself willing to pay for his education, but had not proposed to receive him at Folking. And as to that matter of heirship, he gave his brother to understand that it was not to be regarded as a settled thing. Folking was now his own to do what he liked with it, and as such it was to remain. But he would treat his nephew as a son while the nephew seemed to him to merit such treatment. As for the estate, he was not at all sure whether it would not be better for the community at large, and for the Caldigate family in particular, that it should be cut up and sold in small parcels. There was a long correspondence between him and his brother, which was ended by his declaring that he did not wish to see any of the family just at present at Folking. He was low in spirits, and would prefer to be alone.

He was very low in spirits and completely alone. All those who knew anything about him,—and they were

very few, the tenants, perhaps, and servants, and old Mr. Bolton,—were of opinion that he had torn his son out from all place in his heart, had so thoroughly disinherited the sinner, not only from his house and acres, but from his love, that they did not believe him capable of suffering from regret. But even they knew very little of the man. As he wandered about alone among the dikes, as he sat alone among his books, even as he pored over the volumes which were always in his hand, he was ever mourning and moaning over his desolation. His wife and daughters had been taken from him by the hand of God;—but how had it come to pass that he had also lost his son, that son who was all that was left to him? When he had first heard of those dealings with Davis, while John was amusing himself with the frivolities of Babington, he had been full of wrath, and had declared to himself that the young man must be expelled, if not from all affection, yet from all esteem. And he had gone on to tell himself that it would be unprofitable for him to live with a son whom he did not esteem. Then it had come to pass that, arguing it out in his own mind, rationally, as he had thought, but still under the impulse of hot anger, he had determined that it was better that they should part, even though the parting should be for ever. But now he had almost forgotten Davis,—had turned the matter over in his mind till he had taught himself to think that the disruption had been altogether his son's work, and in no degree his own. His son had not loved him. He had not been able to inspire his son with love. He was solitary and wretched because he had been harsh and unforgiving. That was his own judgment as to himself. But he never said a word of his feelings to any human being.

John had promised to write. The promise had not been very enthusiastically given; but still, as the months went by, it was constantly remembered. The young man, after leaving Cambridgeshire, had remained some weeks at the Shands' house before he had started;—and from thence he had not written. The request had been that he should write from Australia, and the correspondence between him and his father had always been so slight, that it had not occurred to him to write from Pollington. But Mr. Caldgate had,—not expected, but hoped that a letter might come at the last moment. He knew to a day, to an hour, when the vessel would sail from Plymouth. There might have been a letter from Plymouth, but no letter came. And then the months went by slowly. The son did not write from Melbourne, nor from Nobble,—nor from Ahalala till gold had been found. So it came to pass that nearly eight months had passed, and that the father had told himself again and again that his son had torn himself altogether away from all remembrance of his home, before the letter came.

It was not a long letter, but it was very satisfactory. The finding of the gold was in itself, of course, a great thing, but the manner in which it was told, without triumph or exultation, but with an air of sober, industrious determination, was much more; and then there was a word or two at the end: "Dear father,—I think of you every day, and am already looking forward to the time when I may return and see you again." As he read it, the tears rolled down his cheeks, and unluckily the old housekeeper came into the room at the same time.

"Is it from Mr. John, sir?"

He had to recover himself, and to get rid of his

tears, and to answer the old woman in an unconcerned tone, all in a moment, and it disconcerted him.

"Yes,—yes;" he said. "I'll tell you all about it another time."

"Is he well, sir?"

"I daresay he is. He doesn't say. It's about business. Didn't you hear me say that I'd tell you another time?" And so the old woman was turned out of the room, having seen the tear and heard the little gurgle in the throat.

"He seems to be doing well," the Squire said to Mr. Holt. "He has got a couple of partners, and they have succeeded in finding gold. He may probably come back some day; but I don't suppose it will be for the next twenty years."

After that he marked the posts, which he knew came from that part of the world by San Francisco, and had resolved not to expect anything by that of the next month,—when there came, a day before its time, a much longer letter than the last. In this there was given a detailed description of the "claim" at Ahalala, which had already been named Folking. Much was said of Mick, and much was said of Dick, both of whom were working "as steady as rocks." The number of ounces extracted were stated, with the amount of profits which had been divided. And something was said as to the nature of their life at Ahalala. They were still living under their original tent, but were meditating the erection of a wooden shanty. Ahalala, the writer said, was not a place at which a prosperous miner could expect to locate himself for many years; but the prospects were good enough to justify some present attention to personal comforts. All this was rational, pleasant, and straightforward. And in the

letter there was no tone or touch of the old quarrel. It was full and cordial,—such as any son might write to any father. It need hardly be said that there was no mention made in it of Mrs. Smith. It was written after the return of John Caldigate from Sydney to Ahalala, but contained no reference to any matrimonial projects.

Letters then came regularly, month by month, and were always regularly answered,—till a chance reader would have thought that no father and no son stood on better terms with each other. There had been misfortunes; but the misfortunes did not seem to touch John Caldigate himself. After three months of hard work and steady conduct Mick Maggott had broken out and had again taken to drinking champagne out of buckets. Efforts were made, with infinite trouble, to reclaim him, which would be successful for a time,—and then again he would slip away into the mud. And then Shand would sometimes go into the mud with him; and Shand, when drunk, would be more unmanageable even than Mick. And this went on till Mick had—killed himself, and Dick Shand had disappeared. “I grieve for the man as for a dear friend,” he said in one of his father’s letters; “for he has been as true to me as steel in all things, save drink; and I feel that I have learned under him the practical work of a gold-miner, as it cannot be learned except by the unwearied attention of the teacher. Could he have kept from spirits, this man would have made a large fortune, and would have deserved it; for he was indefatigable and never-ending in resources.” Such was the history of poor Mick Maggott.

And Shand’s history was told also. Shand strayed away to Queensland, and then returning was again ad-

mitted to a certain degree of partnership, and then again fell into drink, and at last, deserting the trade of a miner, tried his hand at various kinds of work, till at last he became a simple shepherd. From time to time Caldigate sent him money when he was in want of it, but they had not again come together as associates in their work.

All this was told in his monthly letters which came to be expected at Folking, till each letter was regarded as the rising of a new sun. There is a style of letter-writing which seems to indicate strength of purpose and a general healthy condition on the part of the writer.

In all his letters, the son spoke of himself and his doings with confidence and serenity, somewhat surprising his father after a while by always desiring to be remembered to Mr., Mrs., and Miss Bolton. This went on not only from month to month, but from year to year, till at the end of three years from the date at which the son had left Folking, there had come to be a complete confidence between him and his father. John Caldigate had gone into partnership with Crinkett,—who had indeed tried to cheat him wretchedly, but had failed,—and at that time was the manager of the Polyeuca mine. The claim at Ahalala had been sold, and he had deserted the flashy insecurity of alluvial searchings for the fundamental security of rock-gold. He was deep in the crushing of quartz, and understood well the meaning of two ounces to the ton,—that glittering boast by which Crinkett had at first thought to allure him. From time to time he sent money home, paying back to his father and to Bolton's bank what had been borrowed on the estate. For there had passed between them many communications respecting Folk-

ing. The extravagances of the son became almost the delight of the father, when the father had become certain of the son's reform. There had been even jocular reference to Davis, and a complete understanding as to the amount of money to be given to the nephew in compensation for the blighted hopes as to the reversion of the property.

Why it should have been that these years of absence should have endeared to John Caldigate a place which, while it was his home, had always been distasteful to him, I cannot perhaps explain to those readers who have never strayed far from their original nests;—and to those who have been wanderers I certainly need not explain it. As soon as he felt that he could base the expression of his desires as to Folking on the foundation of substantial remittances, he was not slow to say that he should like to keep the place. He knew that he had no right to the reversion, but perhaps his father would sympathise with his desire to buy back his right. His father, with all his political tenets as to land, with his often-expressed admiration as to the French system, with his loud denunciations of the absurdity of binding a special family to a special fraction of the earth's surface, did sympathise with him so strongly that he at once accepted the arrangement. "I think that his conduct has given him a right to demand it," he said to Mr. Bolton.

"I don't quite see that. Money certainly gives a man great powers. If he has money enough he can buy the succession to Folking if you choose to sell it to him."

"I mean as my son," said the father somewhat proudly. "He was the heir."

"But he ceased to be so,—by his own doing. I ad-

vised you to think longer over it before you allowed him to dispossess himself."

"It certainly has been all for the best."

"I hope so. But when you talk of his right, I am bound to say that he has none. Folking is now yours, without encumbrance, and you can give it to whom you please."

"It was he who paid off the mortgage."

"You have told me that he sent you part of the money;—but that's between you and him. I am very glad, Caldigate, that your son has done so well;—and the more so perhaps because the early promise was not good. But it may be doubted whether a successful gold-digger will settle down quietly as an English country gentleman."

There can be no doubt that old Mr. Bolton was a little jealous, and, perhaps, in some degree incredulous, as to the success of John Caldigate. His sons had worked hard from the very beginning of their lives. With them there had been no period of Newmarket, Davis, and disreputation. On the basis of capital, combined with conduct, they had gradually risen to high success. But here was a young man, who, having by his self-indulgence, thrown away all the prospects of his youth, had rehabilitated himself by the luck of finding gold in a gully. To Mr. Bolton it was no better than had he found a box of treasure at the bottom of a well. Mr. Bolton had himself been a seeker of money all his life, but he had his prejudices as to the way in which money was to be sought. It should be done in a gradual, industrious manner, and in accordance with recognised forms. A digger who might by chance find a lump of gold as big as his head, or might work for three months without finding any, was

to him only one degree better than Davis, and therefore he did not receive his old friend's statements as to the young man's success with all the encouragement which his old friend would have liked.

But his father was very enthusiastic in his return letter to the miner. The matter as to the estate had been arranged. The nephew, who, after all, had not shown himself to be very praiseworthy, had already been—compensated. His own will had already been made,—of course in his son's favour. As there had been so much success,—and as continued success must always be doubtful,—would it not be well that he should come back as soon as possible? There would be enough now for them all. Then he expressed an opinion that such a place as Nobble could not be very nice for a permanent residence.

Nobble was not very nice. Over and beside his professional success, there was not much in his present life which endeared itself to John Caldigate. But the acquisition of gold is a difficult thing to leave. There is a curse about it, or a blessing,—it is hard to decide which,—that makes it almost impossible for a man to tear himself away from its pursuit when it is coming in freely. And the absolute gold,—not the money, not the balance at one's banker's, not the plentiful so much per annum,—but the absolute metal clinging about the palm of one's hands like small gravel, or welded together in a lump too heavy to be lifted, has a peculiar charm of its own. I have heard of a man who, having his pocket full of diamonds, declared, as he let them run through his fingers, that human bliss could not go beyond that sensation. John Caldigate did not shoe his horse with gold; but he liked to feel that he had enough gold by him to shoe a whole team. He could not return

home quite as yet. His affairs were too complicated to be left quite at a moment's notice. If, as he hoped, he should find himself able to leave the colony within four years of the day on which he had begun work, and could then do so with an adequate fortune, he believed that he should have done better than any other Englishman who had set himself to the task of gold-finding. In none of his letters did he say anything special about Hester Bolton; but his inquiries about the family generally were so frequent as to make his father wonder why such questions should be asked. The squire himself, who was living hardly a dozen miles from Mr. Bolton's house, did not see the old banker above once a quarter perhaps, and the ladies of the family certainly not oftener than once a year. Very little was said in answer to any of John's inquiries. "Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Bolton are, I believe, quite well." So much was declared in one of the old squire's letters; and even that little served to make known that at any rate, so far, no tidings as to marriage on the part of Hester had reached the ear of her father's old friend. Perhaps this was all that John Caldigate wanted to learn.

At last there came word that John intended to come home with the next month's mail. This letter arrived about midsummer, when the miner had been absent three years and a half. He had not settled all his affairs so completely but that it might be necessary that he should return; but he thought that he would be able to remain at least twelve months in England. And in England he intended to make his home. Gold, he said, was certainly very attractive; but he did not like New South Wales as a country in which to live. He had now contracted his ventures to the one enterprise of

the Polyeuka mine, from which he was receiving large monthly dividends. If that went on prosperously, perhaps he need not return to the colony at all. "Poor Dick Shand!" he said. "He is a shepherd far away in the west, hardly earning better wages than an English ploughman, and I am coming home with a pocket full of money! A few glasses of whisky have made all the difference!"

The squire when he received this felt more of exultation than he had ever known in his life. It seemed as though something of those throbbings of delight which are common to most of us when we are young, had come to him for the first time in his old age. He could not bring himself to care in the least for Dick Shand. At last,—at last,—he was going to have near him a companion that he could love.

"Well, yes; I suppose he has put together a little money," he said to Farmer Holt, when that worthy tenant asked enthusiastically as to the truth of the rumours which were spread about as to the young squire's success. "I rather think he'll settle down and live in the old place after all."

"That's what he ought to do, squire—that's what he ought to do," said Mr. Holt, almost choked by the energy of his own utterances.

CHAPTER XIV

AGAIN AT HOME

ON his arrival in England John Caldigate went instantly down to Folking. He had come back quite fortified in his resolution of making Hester Bolton his wife, if he should find Hester Bolton willing, and if she should have grown at all into that form and manner, into those ways of look, of speech, and of gait, which he had pictured to himself when thinking of her. Away at Nobble the females by whom he had been surrounded had not been attractive to him. In all our colonies the women are beautiful; and in the large towns a society is soon created, of which the fastidious traveller has very little ground to complain; but in the small, distant bush-towns, as they are called, the rougher elements must predominate. Our hero, though he had worn moleskin trousers and jersey shirts, and had worked down a pit twelve hours a day with a pickaxe, had never reconciled himself to female roughness. He had condescended to do so occasionally,—telling himself that it was his destiny to pass his life among such surroundings; but his imagination had ever been at work with him, and he possessed a certain aptitude for romance which told him continually that Hester Bolton was the dream of his life, and ought to become, if possible, the reality; and now he came back to attempt the reality,—unless he should find that the Hester Bolton of Chesterton was altogether different from the Hester Bolton of his dreams.

The fatted calf was killed for him in a very simple but full-hearted way. There was no other guest to witness the meeting. "And here you are," said the father.

"Yes, sir, here I am;—all that's left of me."

"There is quite plenty," said the father, looking at the large proportions of his son. "It seems but a day or two since you went;—and yet they have been long days. I hardly expected to see you again, John,—certainly not so soon as this; certainly not in such circumstances. If ever a man was welcome to a house, you are welcome to this. And now,—what do you mean to do with yourself?"

"By nine o'clock to-morrow morning you will probably find a pit opened on the lawn, and I shall be down to the middle, looking for gold. Ah, sir, I wish you could have known poor Mick Maggott."

"If he would have made holes in my lawn I am glad he did not come home with you." This was the first conversation, but both the father and son felt that there was a tone about it which had never before been heard between them.

John Caldigate at this time was so altered in appearance that they who had not known him well might possibly have mistaken him. He was now nearly thirty, but looked older than his age. The squareness of his brow was squarer, and here and there through his dark brown hair there was to be seen an early tinge of coming grey; and about his mouth was all the decision of purpose which comes to a man when he is called upon to act quickly on his own judgment in matters of importance; and there was that look of self-confidence which success gives. He had thriven in all that he had undertaken. In that gold-finding business of his he

had made no mistakes. Men who had been at it when a boy had tried to cheat him, but had failed. He had seen into such mysteries as the business possessed with quick glances, and had soon learned to know his way. And he had neither gambled nor drank,—which are the two rocks on which gold-miners are apt to wreck their vessels. All this gave him an air of power and self-assertion which might, perhaps, have been distasteful to an indifferent acquaintance, but which at this first meeting was very pleasing to the father. His son was somebody,—had done something, that son of whom he had been so thoroughly ashamed when the dealings with Davis had first been brought to light. He had kept up his reading too; had strong opinions of his own respecting politics; regarded the colonies generally from a politico-economical point of view; had ideas on social, religious, and literary subjects sufficiently alike to his father's not to be made disagreeable by the obstinacy with which he maintained them. He had become much darker in colour, having been, as it seemed, bronzed through and through by colonial suns and colonial labour. Altogether he was a son of whom any father might be proud, as long as the father managed not to quarrel with him. Mr. Caldigate, who during the last four years had thought very much on the subject, was determined not to quarrel with his son.

“You asked, sir, the other day what I meant to do?”

“What are we to find to amuse you?”

“As for amusement, I could kill rats as I used to do; or slaughter a hecatomb of pheasants at Babington,”—here the old man winced, though the word hecatomb reconciled him a little to the disagreeable allusion. “But it has come to me now that I want so much more than amusement. What do you say to a farm?”

"On the estate?"—and the landlord at once began to think whether there was any tenant who could be induced to go without injustice.

"About three times as big as the estate if I could find it. A man can farm five thousand acres as well as fifty, I take it, if he have the capital. I should like to cut a broad sward, or, better still, to roam among many herds. I suppose a man should have ten pounds an acre to begin with. The difficulty would be in getting the land." But all this was said half in joke; for he was still of opinion that he would, after his year's holiday, be forced to return for a time to New South Wales. He had fixed a price for which, up to a certain date, he would sell his interest in the Polyuka mine. But the price was high, and he doubted whether he would get it; and, if not, then he must return.

He had not been long at Folking,—not as yet long enough to have made his way into the house at Chester-ton,—before annoyance arose. Mrs. Shand was most anxious that he should go to Pollington and "tell them anything about poor Dick." They did, in truth, know everything about poor Dick; that poor Dick's money was all gone, and that poor Dick was earning his bread, or rather his damper, mutton, and tea, wretchedly, in the wilderness of a sheep-run in Queensland. The mother's letter was not very piteous, did not contain much of complaint,—alluded to poor Dick as one whose poverty was almost natural, but still it was very pressing. The girls were so anxious to hear all the details,—particularly Maria! The details of the life of a drunken sot are not pleasant tidings to be poured into a mother's ear, or a sister's. And then, as they two had gone away equal, and as he, John Caldigate, had returned rich, whereas poor Dick was a wretched

menial creature, he felt that his very presence in England would carry with it some reproach against himself. He had in truth been both loyal and generous to Dick; but still,—there was the truth. He had come back as a rich man to his own country, while Dick was a miserable Queensland shepherd. It was very well for him to tell his father that a few glasses of whisky had made the difference; but it would be difficult to explain this to the large circle at Pollington, and very disagreeable even to him to allude to it. And he did not feel disposed to discuss the subject with Maria, with that closer confidence of which full sympathy is capable. And yet he did not know how to refuse to pay the visit. He wrote a line to say that as soon as he was at liberty he would run up to Pollington, but that at present business incidental to his return made such a journey impossible.

But the letter, or letters, which he received from Babington were more difficult to answer even than the Shand despatch. There were three of them,—from his uncle, from Aunt Polly, and from—not Julia—but Julia's second sister; whereby it was signified that Julia's heart was much too heavily laden to allow her to write a simple, cousinly note. The Babington girls were still Babington girls,—would still romp, row boats, and play cricket; but their condition was becoming a care to their parents. Here was this cousin come back, unmarried, with gold at command,—not only once again his father's heir, but with means at command which were not at all diminished by the Babington imagination.

After all that had passed in the linen-closet what escape would there be for him? That he should come to Babington would be a matter of course. The real

kindness which had been shown to him there as a child would make it impossible that he should refuse.

Caldigate did feel it to be impossible to refuse. Though Aunt Polly had on that last occasion been somewhat hard upon him, had laid snares for him, and endeavoured to catch him as a fowler catches a bird, still there had been the fact that she had been as a mother to him when he had no other mother. His uncle, too, had supplied him with hunting and shooting and fishing, when hunting and shooting and fishing were the great joys of his life. It was incumbent on him to go to Babington,—probably would be incumbent on him to pay a prolonged visit there. But he certainly would not marry Julia. As to that his mind was so fixed that even though he should have to declare his purpose with some rudeness, still he would declare it. "My aunt wants me to go over to Babington," he said to his father.

"Of course she does."

"And I must go?"

"You know best what your own feelings are as to that. After you went, they made all manner of absurd accusations against me. But I don't wish to force a quarrel upon you on that account."

"I should be sorry to quarrel with them, because they were kind to me when I was a boy. They are not very wise."

"I don't think I ever knew such a houseful of fools." There was no relationship by blood between the Squire of Folking and the Squire of Babington; but they had married two sisters, and therefore Mrs. Babington was Aunt Polly to John Caldigate.

"But fools may be very worthy, sir. I should say that a great many people are fools to you."

"Not to me especially," said the squire, almost angrily.

"People who read no books are always fools to those who do read."

"I deny it. Our neighbour over the water"—the Middle Wash was always called the water at Folking—"never looks at a book, as far as I know, and he is not a fool. He thoroughly understands his own business. But your uncle Babington doesn't know how to manage his own property,—and yet he knows nothing else. That's what I call being a fool."

"Now, I'm going to tell you a secret, sir."

"A secret!"

"You must promise to keep it."

"Of course I will keep it, if it ought to be kept."

"They want me to marry Julia."

"What!"

"My cousin Julia. It's an old affair. Perhaps it was not Davis only that made me run away five years ago."

"Do you mean they asked you;—or did you ask her?"

"Well; I did not ask her. I do not know that I can be more explicit. Nevertheless it is expected; and as I do not mean to do it, you can see that there is a difficulty."

"I would not go near the place, John."

"I must."

"Then you'll have to marry her."

"I won't."

"Then there'll be a quarrel."

"It may be so, but I will avoid it if possible. I must go. I could not stay away without laying myself open to a charge of ingratitude. They were very kind to

me in the old days." Then the subject was dropped; and on the next morning, John wrote to his aunt saying that he would go over to Babington after his return from London. He was going to London on business, and would come back from London to Babington on a day which he named. Then he resolved that he would take Pollington on his way down, knowing that a disagreeable thing to be done is a lion in one's path which should be encountered and conquered as soon as possible.

But there was one visit which he must pay before he went up to London. "I think I shall ride over tomorrow, and call on the Boltons," he said to his father.

"Of course; you can do that if you please."

"He was a little rough to me, but he was kind. I stayed a night at his house, and he advanced me the money."

"As for the money, that was a matter of business. He had his security, and, in truth, his interest. He is an honest man, and a very old friend of mine. But perhaps I may as well tell you that he has always been a little hard about you."

"He didn't approve of Davis," said the son, laughing.

"He is too prejudiced a man to forget Davis."

"The more he thinks of Davis, the better he'll think of me if I can make him believe that I am not likely to want Davis again."

"You'll find him probably at the bank about half-past two."

"I shall go to the house. It wouldn't be civil if I didn't call on Mrs. Bolton."

As the squire was never in the habit of going to the house at Chesterton himself, and as Mrs. Bolton was

a lady who kept up none of the outward ceremonies of social life, he did not quite understand this; but he made no further objection.

On the following day, about five in the afternoon, he rode through the iron gates, which he with difficulty caused to be opened for him, and asked for Mrs. Bolton. When he had been here before, the winter had commenced, and everything around had been dull and ugly; but now it was July, and the patch before the house was bright with flowers. The roses were in full bloom, and every morsel of available soil was bedded out with geraniums. As he stood holding his horse by the rein while he rang the bell, a side-door leading through the high brick wall from the garden, which stretched away behind the house, was suddenly opened, and a lady came through with a garden hat on, and garden gloves, and a basket full of rose leaves in her hand. It was the lady of whom he had never ceased to think from the day on which he had been allowed just to touch her fingers, now five years ago.

It was she, of course, whom he had come to see, and there she was to be seen. It was of her that he had come to form a judgment,—to tell himself whether she was or was not such as he had dreamed her to be. He had not been so foolishly romantic as to have been unaware that in all probability she might have grown up to be something very different from that which his fancy had depicted. It might or it might not come to pass that that promise of loveliness,—of loveliness combined with innocence and full intelligence,—should be kept. How often it is that Nature is unkind to a girl as she grows into womanhood, and robs the attractive child of her charms! How often will the sparkle of early youth get itself quenched utterly by

the dampness and clouds of the opening world. He knew all that,—and knew too that he had only just seen her, had barely heard her voice which had sounded so silvery sweet in his ears.

But there she was,—to be seen again, to be heard, if possible, and to receive his judgment. “Miss Bolton,” he said, coming down the stone steps which he had ascended, that he might ring the bell, and offering her his hand.

“Mr. Caldigate!”

“You remember me, then?”

“Oh, yes, I remember you very well. I do not see people often enough to forget them. And papa said that you were coming home.”

“I have come at once to call upon your mother and your father,—and upon you. I have to thank him for great kindness to me before I went.”

“Poor mamma is not quite well,” said the daughter. “She has headaches so often, and she has one now. And papa has not come back from the bank. I have been gardening and am all——.” Then she stopped and blushed, as though ashamed of herself for saying so much.

“I am sorry Mrs. Bolton is unwell. I will not go through the ceremony of leaving a card as I hope to be able to come again to thank her for her kindness before I went on my travels. Will you tell your father that I called?” Then he mounted his horse, feeling, as he did so, that he was throwing away an opportunity which kind fortune had given him. There they were together, he and this girl of whom he had dreamed;—and now he was leaving her, because he did not know how to hold her in conversation for ten minutes! But it was true, and he had to leave her. He could not in-

stantly tell her how he admired her, how he loved her, how he had thought of her, and how completely she had realised all his fondest dreams. When on his horse, he turned round, and, lifting his hat to her, took a last glance. It could not have been otherwise, he said to himself. He had been sure that she would grow up to be exactly that which he had found her. To have supposed that Nature could have been untrue to such promises as had been made then, would have been to suppose Nature a liar.

Just outside the gate he met the old banker, who, according to his daily custom, had walked back from the town. "Yes," said Mr. Bolton, "I remember you,—I remember you very well. So you found a lot of gold?"

"I got some."

"You have been one of the few fortunate, I hear. I hope you will be able to keep it, and to make a good use of it. My compliments to your father. Good-evening."

"I shall take an early opportunity of paying my respects again to Mrs. Bolton, who, I am sorry to hear, is not well enough to see me," said Caldigate, preventing the old curmudgeon from escaping with his intended rapidity.

"She is unfortunately often an invalid, sir,—and feels therefore that she has no right to exact from anyone the ceremony of morning visits. Good-evening, sir."

But he cared not much for this coldness. Having found where the gold lay at this second Ahalala,—that the gold was real gold,—he did not doubt but that he would be able to make good his mining operations.

CHAPTER XV

AGAIN AT POLLINGTON

ON his arrival at Pollington, all the Shands welcomed him as though he had been the successful son or successful brother who had gone out from among them; and spoke of "Poor Dick" as being the unsuccessful son or unsuccessful brother,—as indeed he was. There did not seem to be the slightest anger against him, in that he had thriven and had left Dick behind him in such wretched poverty. There was no just ground for anger, indeed. He was well aware of that. He had done his duty by Dick to the best of his ability. But fathers and mothers are sometimes apt to think that more should be done for their own children than a friend's best ability can afford. These people, however, were reasonable. "Poor Dick!" "Isn't it sad?" "I suppose when he's quite far away in the bush like that he can't get it,"—by which last miserable shred of security the poor mother allowed herself to be in some degree comforted.

"Now I want you to tell me," said the father, when they were alone together on the first evening, "what is really his condition?"

"He was a shepherd when I last heard about him."

"He wrote to his mother by the last mail, asking whether something cannot be done for him. He was a shepherd then. What is a shepherd?"

"A man who goes about with the sheep all day, and brings them up to camp at night. He may prob-

ably be a week without seeing a human being. That is the worst of it."

"How is he fed?"

"Food is brought out to his hut,—perhaps once a week, perhaps once a fortnight,—so much meat, so much flour, so much tea, and so much sugar. And he has thirty or thirty-five pounds a year besides."

"Paid weekly?"

"No;—perhaps quarterly, perhaps half-yearly. He can do nothing with his money as long as he is there. If he wants a pair of boots or a new shirt, they send it out to him from the store, and his employer charges him with the price. It is a poor life, sir."

"Very poor. Now tell me, what can we do for him?"

"It is an affair of money."

"But is it an affair of money, Mr. Caldigate? Is it not rather an affair of drink? He has had his money,—more than his share; more than he ought to have had. But even though I were able to send him more, what good would it do him?"

This was a question very difficult to answer. Caldigate had been forced to answer it to himself in reference to his own conduct. He had sent money to his former friend, and could without much damage to himself have sent more. Latterly he had been in that condition as to money in which a man thinks nothing of fifty pounds,—that condition which induces one man to shoe his horse with gold, and another to chuck his bank-notes about like half-crowns. The condition is altogether opposed to the regulated prudence of confirmed wealth. Caldigate had stayed his hand in regard to Dick Shand simply because the affair had been one not of money but of drink. "I suppose a man may be cured by the absence of liquor?"

"By the enforced absence?"

"No doubt they often break out again. I hardly know what to say, sir. If you think that money will do good,—money, that is, in moderation,—I will advance it. He and I started together, and I am sometimes aghast with myself when I think of the small matter which, like the point on a railway, sent me running rapidly on to prosperity,—while the same point, turned wrong, hurried him to ruin. I have taken my glass of grog, too, my two glasses,—or perhaps more. But that which would elate him into some fury of action would not move me. It was something nature did for me rather than virtue. I am a rich man, and he is a shepherd, because something was put into my stomach capable of digesting bad brandy, which was not put into his."

"A man has more than one chance. When he found how it was with him, he should have abstained. A man must pay the fine of his own weakness."

"Oh, yes. It is all understood somewhere, I suppose, though we don't understand it. I tell you what it is, Dr. Shand. If you think that five hundred pounds left with you can be of any assistance, you can have it."

But the doctor seemed to doubt whether the money would do any good, and refused to take it, at any rate for the present. What could he do with it, if he did take it? "I fear that he must lie upon his bed as he has made it," said the doctor sorrowfully. "It is a complaint which money cannot cure, but can always exaggerate. If, without costing myself or my family a shilling, I could put a thousand pounds into his hands to-morrow, I do not know whether I ought to do it."

"You will remember my offer."

The doctor thanked him, and said that he would

remember. So the conversation was ended, and the doctor went about the ordinary occupation of his life, apparently without any settled grief at his heart. He had done his duty by his son, and that sufficed,—or almost sufficed, for him.

Then came the mother's turn. Could anything be sent to the poor lost one,—to poor Dick? Clothes ran chiefly in her mind. If among them they could make up a dozen shirts, would there be any assured means of getting them conveyed safely to Dick's shepherd-hut out in the Queensland bush? In answer to this Caldigate would fain have explained, had it been possible, that Dick would not care much for a dozen new shirts,—that they would be to him, even if received, almost as little a source of comfort as would be a ton of Newcastle coals. He had sunk below shirts by the dozen; almost below single shirts, such as Mrs. Shand and her daughters would be able to fabricate. Some upper flannel garment, and something in the nature of trousers, with a belt round his middle, and an old straw-hat would be all the wardrobe required by him. Men by dint of misery rise above the need of superfluities. The poor wretch whom you see rolling himself, as it were, at the corner of the street within his old tattered filthy coat, trying to extract something more of life and warmth out of the last glass of gin which he has swallowed, is by no means discomposed because he has no clean linen for the morrow. All this Caldigate understood thoroughly;—but there was a difficulty in explaining it to Dick Shand's mother. "I think there would be some trouble about the address," he said.

"But you must know so many people out there."

"I have never been in Queensland myself, and have

no acquaintance with squatters. But that is not all, Mrs. Shand."

"What else? You can tell me. Of course I know what it is that he has come to. I don't blind myself to it, Mr. Caldigate, even though I am his mother. But I am his mother; and if I could comfort him, just a little——"

"Clothes are not what he wants;—of clothes he can get what is necessary, poor as he is."

"What is it he wants most?"

"Somebody to speak to;—someone to be kind to him."

"My poor boy!"

"As he has fallen to what he is now, so can he rise again if he can find courage to give his mind to it. I think that if you write to him and tell him so, that will be better than sending him shirts. The doctor has been talking to me about money for him."

"But, Mr. Caldigate, he couldn't drink the shirts out there in the bush. Here, where there is a pawn-broker at all the corners, they drink everything."

He had promised to stay two days at Pollington, and was of course aware of the dangers among which he walked. Maria had been by no means the first to welcome him. All the other girls had presented themselves before her. And when at last she did come forward she was very shy. The eldest daughter had married her clergyman though he was still only a curate; and the second had been equally successful with Lieutenant Postlethwaite though the lieutenant had been obliged in consequence to leave the army and to earn his bread by becoming agent to a soap-making company. Maria Shand was still Maria Shand, and was it not too probable that she had remained so for the sake of that com-

panion who had gone away with her darling brother Dick? "Maria has been thinking so much about your coming," said the youngest,—not the girl who had been impertinent and ill-behaved before, for she had since become a grown-up Miss Shand, and had a young attorney of her own on hand, and was supposed to be the one of the family most likely to carry her pigs to a good market,—but the youngest of them all who had been no more than a child when he had been at Pollington before. "I hope she is at home," said Caldigate. "At home! Of course she's at home. She wouldn't be away when you're coming!"

The Shands were demonstrative, always;—and never hypocritical. Here it was; told at once,—the whole story. He was to atone for having left Dick in the lurch by marrying Maria. There did seem to him to be a certain amount of justice in the idea; but then, unfortunately, it could not be carried out. If there were nothing else against it but the existence of the young lady at Chesterton, that alone would have been sufficient. And then, though Maria Shand was very well, though, no doubt she would make a true and loving wife to any husband, though there had been a pretty touch of feeling about the Thomson's "Seasons,"—still, still, she was not all that he fancied that a wife should be. He was quite willing to give £500 for Dick; but after that he thought that he would have had almost enough of the Shands. He could not marry Maria, and so he must say plainly if called upon to declare himself in the matter. There was an easiness about the family generally which enabled him to hope that the difficulty would be light. It would be as nothing compared with that coming scene between himself and Aunt Polly, perhaps between himself and his Uncle Bab-

ington, or perhaps,—worse again,—between himself and Julia!

When he found himself alone with Maria in the drawing-room on the following morning, he almost thought that it must have been arranged by the family. “Doesn’t it seem almost no time since you went away,” said the young lady.

“It has gone quickly;—but a great deal has been done.”

“I suppose so. Poor Dick!”

“Yes, indeed! Poor fellow! We can only hope about Dick. I have been speaking to your father about him.”

“Of course we all know that you did your very best for him. He has said so himself when he has written. But you;—you have been fortunate.”

“Yes, I have done very well. There is so much chance at it that there is nothing to be proud of.”

“I am sure there is a great deal;—cleverness, and steadiness, and courage, and all that. We were delighted to hear it, though poor Dick could not share it with you. You have made an immense fortune.”

“Oh dear no,—not that. I have been able to get over the little difficulties which I left behind me when I went away, and have got something in hand to live upon.”

“And now——?”

“I suppose I shall go back again,” said Caldgate, with an air of indifference.

“Go back again!” said Maria, who had not imagined this. But still a man going back to Australia might take a wife with him. She would not object to the voyage. Her remembrance of the evening on which she had crept down and put the little book into his

valise was so strong that she felt herself to be justified in being in love with him. "But not for always?"

"Certainly not;—but just to wind up affairs."

It would be no more than a pleasant wedding-tour,—and, perhaps, she could do something for poor Dick. She could take the shirts so far on their destination.

"Oh, Mr. Caldigate, how well I remember that last night!"

"So indeed, do I,—and the book." The hardship upon the moth is that though he has already scorched himself terribly in the flame, and burned up all the tender fibre of his wings, yet he can't help returning to the seductions of the tallow-candle till his whole body has become a wretched cinder. Why should he have been the first to speak of the book?

Of course she blushed, and of course she stammered. But in spite of her stammering she could say a word. "I daresay you never looked at it."

"Indeed I did,—very often. Once when Dick saw it in my hands, he wanted to take it away from me."

"Poor Dick!"

"But I have never parted with it for an hour!"

"Where is it now?" she asked.

"Here," said Caldigate, pulling it out of the breast-pocket of his coat. If he had had the presence of mind to say that he had lent the book to another young lady, and that she had never returned it, there might probably have been an end of this little trouble at once. But when the little volume appeared, just as though it had been kept close to his heart during all these four years, of course she was entitled to hope. He had never opened the book since that morning in his cabin, not caring for the academic beauties of Thomson's "Seasons";—had never looked at it till it had occurred to

him as proper that he should take it with him to Pollington. Now he brought it out of his pocket, and she put out her hand to receive it from him. "You are not going to take it back again?"

"Certainly not if it be of any value to you?"

"Do you not value the presents which your friends make you?"

"If I care for the friends, I do."

"As I care very much for this friend I shall keep the book."

"I don't think that can be true, Mr. Caldigate."

He was painfully near the blaze;—determined not to be burned, and yet with no powers of flying away from the candle into the farthest corner of the room. "Why not true? I have kept it hitherto. It has been with me in many very strange places."

Then there was a pause,—while he thought of escaping, and she of utilising the occasion. And yet it was not in her nature to be unmaidenly or aggressive. Only if he did like her it would be so very nice, and it is so often the case that men want a little encouragement! "I daresay you thought more of the book than the donor."

"That is intended to be unkind."

"No;—certainly not. I can never be unkind to a friend who has been so very good as you were to poor Dick. Whatever else may happen, I shall,—never,—forget—that." By this time there was a faint sound of sobbing to be heard, and then she turned away her face that she might wipe a tear from her eyes. It was a real tear, and a real sob, and she really thought that she was in love with him.

"I know I ought not to have come here," he said.

"Why not?" she asked energetically.

"Because my coming would give rise to so much sadness about your brother."

"I am so glad you have come,—so very glad. Of course we wanted to hear. And besides——"

"What besides?"

"Papa and mamma, and all of them, are so glad to see you. We never forget old friends." Then again there was silence. "Never," she repeated, as she rose from her chair slowly and went out of the room. Though he had fluttered flamewards now and again, though he had shown some moth-like aptitudes, he had not shown himself to be a downright, foolish, blind-eyed moth, determined to burn himself to a cinder as a moth should do. And she;—she was weak. Having her opportunity at command, she went away and left him, because she did not know what more to say. She went away to her own bedroom, and cried, and had a headache, during the remainder of the day. And yet there was no other day.

Late that evening, just at the hour when, on the previous night, he was closeted with the father, he found himself closeted with the mother. "She has never forgotten you for one moment since you left us," said the mother. Mrs. Shand had rushed into the subject so quickly that these were almost the first words she said to him. He remained quite quiet, looking out from the open window into the moonlight. When a distinct proposition was made to him like this, he certainly would not be a moth. "I don't know whether you have thought of her too, Mr. Caldigate." He only shook his head. "That is so?"

"I hope you do not think that I have been to blame in any way," he said, with a conscience somewhat

stricken;—for he remembered well that he had kissed the young lady on that evening four years ago.

“Oh no. I have no complaint to make. My poor child! It is a pity. But I have nothing more to say. It must be so then?”

“I am the least settled man in all the world, Mrs. Shand.”

“But at some future time?”

“I fear not. My mind is intent on other things.” So it was;—intent on Hester Bolton! But the statement, as he made it, was certainly false, for it was intended to deceive. Mrs. Shand shook hands with him kindly, however, as she sent him away to bed, telling him that breakfast should be ready for him at eight the next morning.

His train left Pollington at nine, and at eight the doctor with all his family were there to greet him at the breakfast-table,—with all the family except Maria. The mother, in the most natural tone in the world, said that poor Maria had a headache and could not come down. They filled his plate with eggs and bacon and toast, and were as good to him as though he had blighted no hopes and broken no heart. He whispered one word at going to the doctor. “Pray remember that whenever you think the money can be of use, it is there. I consider that I owe him quite as much as that.” The father grasped his hand, and all of them blessed him as he went.

“If I can only get away from Babington as easily!” he said to himself, as he took his place in the railway carriage.

CHAPTER XVI

AGAIN AT BABINGTON

THE affair of Julia Babington had been made to him in set terms, and had, if not accepted, not been at once refused. No doubt this had occurred four years ago, and, if either of them had married since, they would have met each other without an unpleasant reminiscence. But they had not done so, and there was no reason why the original proposition should not hold good. After escaping from Babington he had, indeed, given various reasons why such a marriage was impossible. He had sold his inheritance. He was a ruined man. He was going out to Australia as a simple miner. It was only necessary for him to state all this, and it became at once evident that he was below the notice of Julia Babington. But everything had been altered since that. He had regained his inheritance, he had come back a rich man, and he was more than ever indebted to the family because of the violent fight they had made on his behalf, just as he was going. As he journeyed to Babington all this was clear to him; and it was clear to him also that, from his first entrance into the house, he must put on an air of settled purpose, he must gird up his loins seriously, he must let it be understood that he was not as he used to be, ready for worldly lectures from his aunt, or for romping with his female cousins, or for rats, or rabbits, or partridges, with the male members of the family. The cares of the

world must be seen to sit heavily on him, and at the very first mention of a British wife he must declare himself to be wedded to Polyeuca.

At Babington he was received with many fatted calves. The whole family were there to welcome him, springing out upon him and dragging him out of the fly as soon as he had entered the park gates. Aunt Polly almost fainted as she was embracing him under an oak tree; and tears, real tears, ran down the squire's face as he shook both his nephew's hands at once. "By George," said the Babington heir, "you're the luckiest fellow I ever heard of! We all thought Folking was gone for good." As though the possessions of Folking were the summit of human bliss! Caldigate with all the girls around him could not remonstrate with words, but his spirit did remonstrate. "Oh, John, we are so very, very, very, very glad to have you back again," said Julia, sobbing and laughing at the same time. He had kissed them all of course, and now Julia was close to his elbow as he walked up to the house.

In the midst of all this there was hardly opportunity for that deportment which he meant to exercise. When fatted calves are being killed for you by the dozen, it is very difficult to repudiate the good nature of the slaughterers. Little efforts he did make even before he got to the house. "I hardly know how I stand just yet," he had said, in answer to his uncle's congratulations as to his wealth. "I must go out again at any rate."

"Back to Australia?" asked his aunt.

"I fear so. It is a kind of business,—gold mining,—in which it is very hard for a man to know what he's worth. A claim that has been giving you a thousand pounds nett every month for two years past, comes all

of sudden a great deal worse than valueless. You can't give it up, and you have to throw back your thousands in profitless work."

"I wouldn't do that," said the squire.

"I'd stick to what I'd got," said the Babington heir.

"It is a very difficult business," said Caldigate with a considerable amount of deprecation, and an assumed look of age,—as though the cares of gold-seeking had made him indifferent to all the lighter joys of existence.

"But you mean to live at Folking?" asked Aunt Polly.

"I should think probably not. But a man situated as I am, never can say where he means to live."

"But you are to have Folking?" whispered the squire,—whispered it so that all the party heard the words;—whispering not from reticence but excitement.

"That's the idea at present," said the Folking heir.

"But Polyeuka is so much more to me than Folking! A gold mine with fifty or sixty thousand pounds' worth of plant about it, Aunt Polly, is an imperious mistress." In all this our hero was caluminating himself. Polyeuka and the plant he was willing to abandon on very moderate terms, and had arranged to wipe his hands of the whole concern if those moderate terms were accepted. But cousin Julia and Aunt Polly were enemies against whom it was necessary to assume whatever weapons might come to his hand.

He had arranged to stay a week at Babington. He had considered it all very deeply, and had felt that as two days was the least fraction of time which he could with propriety devote to the Shands, so must he give at least a week to Babington. There was, therefore, no necessity for any immediate violence on the part of the ladies. The whole week might probably have been

allowed to pass without absolute violence, had he not shown by various ways that he did not intend to make many visits to the old haunts of his childhood before his return to Australia. When he said that he should not hunt in the coming winter, that he feared his hand was out for shooting; that he had an idea of travelling on the Continent during the autumn; and that there was no knowing when he might be summoned back to Poly-euka, of course there came across Aunt Polly's mind,—and probably also across Julia's mind,—an idea that he meant to give them the slip again. On the former occasion he had behaved badly. This was their opinion. But, as it had turned out, his circumstances at the moment were such as to make his conduct pardonable. He had been harassed by the importunities both of his father and of Davis; and that, under such circumstances, he should have run away from his affianced bride, was almost excusable. But now——! It was very different now. Something must be settled. It was very well to talk about Poly-euka. A man who has engaged himself in business must, no doubt, attend to it. But married men can attend to business quite as well as they who are single. At any rate, there could be no reason why the previous engagement should not be consolidated and made a family affair. There was felt to be something almost approaching to resistance in what he had said and done already. Therefore Aunt Polly flew to her weapons, and summoned Julia also to take up arms. He must be bound at once with chains, but the chains were made as soft as love and flattery could make them. Aunt Polly was almost angry,—was prepared to be very angry;—but not the less did she go on killing fatted calves.

There were archery meetings at this time through

the country, the period of the year being unfitted for other sports. It seemed to Caldigate as though all the bows and all the arrows had been kept specially for him,—as though he was the great toxophile of the age,—whereas no man could have cared less for the amusement than he. He was carried here and was carried there; and then there was a great gathering in their own park at home. But it always came to pass that he and Julia were shooting together,—as though it were necessary that she should teach him,—that she should make up by her dexterity for what was lost by his awkwardness,—that she by her peculiar sweetness should reconcile him to his new employment. Before the week was over, there was a feeling among all the dependents at Babington, and among many of the neighbours, that everything was settled, and that Miss Julia was to be the new mistress of Folking.

Caldigate knew that it was so. He perceived the growth of the feeling from day to day. He could not say that he would not go to the meetings, all of which had been arranged beforehand. Nor could he refuse to stand up beside his cousin Julia and shoot his arrows directly after she had shot hers. Nor could he refrain from acknowledging that though she was awkward in a drawing-room, she was a buxom young woman dressed in green with a feather in her hat and a bow in her hand; and then she could always shoot her arrows straight into the bull's-eye. But he was well aware that the new hat had been bought specially for him, and that the sharpest arrow from her quiver was intended to be lodged in his heart. He was quite determined that any such shooting as that should be unsuccessful.

“Has he said anything?” the mother asked the daughter. “Not a word.” This occurred on the Sun-

day night. He had reached Babington on the previous Tuesday, and was to go to Folking on next Tuesday. "Not a word." The reply was made in a tone almost of anger. Julia did believe that her cousin had been engaged to her, and that she actually had a right to him, now that he had come back, no longer ruined.

"Some men never do," said Aunt Polly, not wishing to encourage her daughter's anger just at present. "Some men are never left alone with a girl for half a moment, but what they are talking stuff and nonsense. Others never seem to think about it in the least. But whether it's the one or whether it's the other, it makes no difference afterwards. He never had much talk of that kind. I'll just say a word to him, Julia."

The saying of the word was put off till late on Sunday evening. Sunday was rather a trying day at Babington. If hunting, shooting, fishing, croquet, lawn-billiards, bow and arrows, battledore and shuttle-cock, with every other game, as games come up and go, constitute a worldly kind of life, the Babingtons were worldly. There surely never was a family in which any kind of work was so wholly out of the question, and every amusement so much a matter of course. But if worldliness and religion are terms opposed to each other, then they were not worldly. There were always prayers for the whole household morning and evening. There were two services on Sunday, at the first of which the males, and at both of which the females, were expected to attend. But the great struggle came after dinner at nine o'clock, when Aunt Polly always read a sermon out loud to the assembled household. Aunt Polly had a certain power of her own, and no one dared to be absent except the single servant who was left in the kitchen to look after the fire.

The squire himself was always there, but a peculiar chair was placed for him, supposed to be invisible to the reader, in which he slept during the whole time, subject to correction from a neighbouring daughter in the event of his snoring. An extra bottle of port after dinner was another Sunday observance which added to the irritability of the occasion,—so that the squire, when the reading and prayers were over, would generally be very cross, and would take himself up to bed almost without a word, and the brothers would rush away almost with indecent haste to their smoking. As the novels had all been put away into a cupboard, and the good books which were kept for the purpose strewed about in place of them, and as knitting, and even music, were tabooed, the girls, having nothing to do, would also go away at an early hour.

“John, would you mind staying a few moments with me?” said Aunt Polly, in her softest voice when Caldigate was hurrying after his male cousins. He knew that the hour had come, and he girded up his loins.

“Come nearer, John,” she said,—and he came nearer, so that she could put her hand upon his. “Do you remember, John, when you and I and Julia were together in that little room upstairs?” There was so much pathos in her voice, she did her acting so well, that his respect for her was greatly augmented,—as was also his fear. “She remembers it very well.”

“Of course I remember it, Aunt Polly. It’s one of those things that a man doesn’t forget.”

“A man ought not to forget such a scene as that,” she said, shaking her head. “A man would be very hard of heart if he could forget it.”

Now must be the moment for his exertion! She had

spoken so plainly as to leave no doubt of her meaning, and she was pausing for an answer; yet he hesitated,—not in his purpose, but doubting as to his own manner of declaring it. He must be very decided. Upon that he was resolved. He would be decided, though they should drag him in pieces with wild horses for it afterwards. But he would fain be gentle with his aunt if it were possible. “My dear Aunt Polly, it won’t do; I’m not going to be caught, and so you may as well give it over.” That was what he wished her to understand;—but he would not say it in such language. Much was due to her, though she was struggling to catch him in a trap. “When I had made such a fool of myself before I went—about money,” he said, “I thought that was all over.”

“But you have made anything but a fool of yourself since,” she replied triumphantly; “you have gone out into the world like a man, and have made your fortune, and have so returned that everybody is proud of you. Now you can take a wife to yourself and settle down, and be a happy goodman.”

It was exactly his view of life;—only there was a difference about the wife to be taken. He certainly had never said a word to his cousin which could justify this attack upon him. The girl had been brought to him in a cupboard, and he had been told that he was to marry her! And that when he had been young and drowned with difficulties. How is a man ever to escape if he must submit under such circumstances as these? “My dear Aunt Polly, I had better tell you at once that I cannot marry my cousin Julia.” Those were the words which he did speak, and as he spoke there was a look about his eyes and his mouth which ought to have made her know that there was no hope.

"And why not? John Caldigate, is this you that I hear?"

"Why should I?"

"Because you promised it."

"I never did, Aunt Polly."

"And because she loves you."

"Even if it were so, am I to be bound by that? But indeed, indeed, I never even suggested it,—never thought of it. I am very fond of my cousin, very fond of all my cousins. But marriage is a different thing. I am inclined to think that cousins had better not marry."

"You should have said that before. But it is nonsense. Cousins marry every day. There is nothing about it either in the Bible or the prayer-book. She will die."

Aunt Polly said this in a tone of voice which made it a matter of regret that she should not have been educated for Drury Lane. But as she said it, he could not avoid thinking of Julia's large ankles, and red cheeks, and of the new green hat and feather. A girl with large ankles is, one may suppose, as liable to die for love as though she were as fine about her feet as a thorough-bred filly; and there is surely no reason why a true heart and a pair of cherry cheeks should not go together. But our imagination has created ideas in such matters so fixed, that it is useless to contend against them. In our endeavours to produce effects, these ideas should be remembered and obeyed. "I hope not on that account," said Caldigate, and as he uttered the words some slightest suspicion of a smile crossed his face.

Then Aunt Polly blazed forth in wrath. "And at such a moment as this you can laugh!"

"Indeed, I did not laugh;—I am very far from laughing, Aunt Polly."

"Because I am anxious for my child, my child whom you have deceived, you make yourself merry with me!"

"I am not merry. I am miserably unhappy because of all this. But I cannot admit that I have deceived my cousin. All that was settled, I thought, when I went away. But coming back at the end of four years, of four such long years, with very different ideas of life——"

"What ideas?"

"Well,—at any rate, with ideas of having my own way,—I cannot submit myself to this plan of yours, which, though it would have given me so much——"

"It would give you everything, sir."

"Granted! But I cannot take everything. It is better that we should understand each other, so that my cousin, for whom I have the most sincere regard, should not be annoyed.

"Much you care!"

"What shall I say?"

"It signifies nothing what you say. You are a false man. You have inveigled your cousin's affections, and now you say that you can do nothing for her. This comes from the sort of society you have kept out at Botany Bay! I suppose a man's word there is worth nothing, and that the women are of such a kind they don't mind it. It is not the way with gentlemen here in England; let me tell you that!" Then she stalked out of the room, leaving him either to go to bed, or join the smokers or to sit still and repent at his leisure, as he might please. His mind, however, was chiefly occupied for the next half hour with thinking whether

it would be possible for him to escape from Babington on the following morning.

Before the morning he had resolved that, let the torment of the day be what it might, he would bear it,—unless by chance he might be turned out of the house. But no tragedy such as that came to relieve him. Aunt Polly gave him his tea at breakfast with a sternly forbidding look,—and Julia was as cherry-cheeked as ever, though very silent. The killing of calves was over, and he was left to do what he pleased during the whole day. One spark of comfort came to him. “John, my boy,” said his uncle in a whisper, “what’s the matter between you and Madame?” Mr. Babington would sometimes call his wife Madame when he was half inclined to laugh at her. Caldigate of course declared that there was nothing wrong. The squire shook his head and went away. But from this it appeared to Caldigate that the young lady’s father was not one of the conspirators,—by ascertaining which his mind was somewhat relieved.

On the next morning the fly came for him, and he went away without any kisses. Upon the whole he was contented with both his visits, and was inclined to assure himself that a man has only to look a difficulty in the face, and that the difficulty will be difficult no longer.

CHAPTER XVII

AGAIN AT PURITAN GRANGE

As Caldigate travelled home to Folking he turned many things in his mind. In the first place he had escaped, and that to him was a matter of self-congratulation. He had declared his purpose in reference to his cousin Julia very clearly;—and though he had done so he had not quarrelled utterly with the family. As far as the young lady's father was concerned, or her brothers, there had been no quarrel at all. The ill-will against him was confined to the women. But as he thought of it all, he was not proud of himself. He had received great kindness from their hands and certainly owed them much in return. When he had been a boy he had been treated almost as one of the family;—but as he had not been quite one of them, would it not have been natural that he should be absorbed in the manner proposed? And then he could not but admit to himself that he had been deficient in proper courage when he had been first caught and taken into the cupboard. On that occasion he had neither accepted nor rejected the young lady; and in such a matter as this silence certainly may be supposed to give consent. Though he rejoiced in his escape he was not altogether proud of his conduct in reference to his friends at Babington.

Would it not have been better that he should have told his aunt frankly that his heart was engaged elsewhere? The lady's name would have been asked, and the lady's name could not have been given. But he

might in this way have prepared the way for the tidings which would have to be communicated should he finally be successful with Hester Bolton. Now such news would reach them as an aggravation of the injury. For that, however, there could be no remedy. The task at present before him was that of obtaining a footing in the house at Chesterton, and the more he thought of it the more he was at a loss to know how to set about it. They could not intend to shut such a girl up, through all her young years, as in a convent. There must be present to the minds of both of them an idea that marriage would be good for her, or, at any rate, that she should herself have some choice in the matter. And if there were to be any son-in-law why should not he have as good a chance as any other? When they should learn how constantly the girl's image had been present to his mind, so far away, during so many years, under such hard circumstances, would not that recommend him to them? Had he not proved himself to be steady, industrious, and a good man of business? In regard to position and fortune was he not such as a father would desire for his daughter? Having lost his claim to Folking, had he not regained it;—and in doing so had he not shown himself to be something much more than merely the heir to Folking? An immediate income would, of course, be necessary;—but there was money enough. He would ask the old man for nothing. Reports said that though the old man had been generous to his own sons, still he was fond of money. He should have the opportunity of bestowing his daughter in marriage without being asked for a shilling. And then John Caldigate bethought himself with some pride that he could make a proper settlement on his wife without burdening the estate at Folking with any dowers. But

of what use would be all this if he could not get at the girl to tell her that he loved her?

He might, indeed, get at the father and tell his purpose plainly and honestly. But he thought that his chance of prevailing with the girl might be better than with the father. In such cases it is so often the daughter who prevails with her own parents after she has surrendered her own heart. The old man had looked at him sternly, had seemed even in that moment of time to disapprove of him. But the girl——. Well; in such an interview as that there had not been much scope for approval. Nor was he a man likely to flatter himself that any girl could fall in love with him at first sight. But she had not looked sternly at him. In the few words which she had spoken her voice had been very sweet. Both of them had said they remembered him after the long interval that had passed;—but the manner of saying so had been very different. He was almost sure that the old man would be averse to him, though he could tell himself personally that there was no just cause for such aversion. But if this were so, he could not forward his cause by making his offer through the father.

“Well, John, how has it gone with you at Babington?” his father asked almost as soon as they were together.

It had not been difficult to tell his father of the danger before he made his visit, but now he hesitated before he could avow that the young lady’s hand had again been offered to him. “Pretty well, sir. We had a good deal of archery and that kind of thing. It was rather slow.”

“I should think so. Was there nothing besides the archery?”

"Not much."

"The young lady was not troublesome?"

"Perhaps the less we say about it the better, sir. They were very kind to me when I was a boy."

"I have nothing to say at all, unless I am to be called on to welcome her as a daughter-in-law."

"You will not have to do that, sir."

"I suppose, John, you mean to marry some day," said the father after a pause. Then it occurred to the son that he must have someone whom he could trust in this matter which now occupied his mind, and that no one probably might be so able to assist him as his father. "I wish I knew what your idea of life is," continued Mr. Caldigate. "I fear you will be growing tired of this place, and that when you get back to your gold mines you will stay there."

"There is no fear of that. I do not love the place well enough."

"If you were settled here, I should feel more comfortable. I sometimes think, John, that if you would fix yourself I would give the property up to you altogether and go away with my books into some town. Cambridge, perhaps, would do as well as any other."

"You must never do that, sir. You must not leave Folking. But as for myself,—I have ideas about my own life."

"Are they such that you can tell them?"

"Yes;—you shall hear them all. But I shall expect you to help me;—or at least not turn against me?"

"Turn against you, John! I hope I may never have to do that again. What is that you mean?" This he said very seriously. There was usually in his voice something of a tone of banter,—a subdued cynicism,—which had caused everybody near him to be afraid of

him, and which even yet was habitual to him. But now that was all gone. Was there to be any new source of trouble betwixt him and his son?

"I intend to ask Hester Bolton to be my wife," said John Caldigate.

The father, who was standing in the library, slapped both his hands down upon the table. "Hester Bolton!"

"Is there any objection?"

"What do you know about her? Why;—she's a child."

"She is nearly twenty, sir."

"Have you ever seen her?"

"Yes, I have seen her,—twice. I daresay you'll think it very absurd, but I have made up my mind about it. If I say that I was thinking about it all the time I was in Australia, of course you will laugh at me."

"I will not laugh at you at all, John."

"If anyone else were to say so to me, I should laugh at them. But yet it was so. Have you ever seen her?"

"I suppose I have. I think I remember a little girl."

"For beauty I have never seen anybody equal to her," said the lover. "I wish you'd go over to Chester-ton and judge for yourself."

"They wouldn't know what such a thing meant. It is years since I have been in the house. I believe that Mrs. Bolton devotes herself to religious exercises, and that she regards me as a pagan."

"That's just the difficulty, sir. How am I to get at her? But you may be sure of this, I mean to do it. If I were beat I do think that then I should go back and bury myself in the gold mines. You asked me what I meant to do about my future life. That is my pur-

pose. If she were my wife I should consult her. We might travel part of the time, and I might have a farm. I should always look upon Folking as my home. But till that is settled, when you ask me what I mean to do with my life, I can only say that I mean to marry Hester Bolton."

"Did you tell them at Babington?"

"I have told nobody but you. How am I to set about it?"

Then Mr. Caldigate sat down and began to scratch his head and to consider. "I don't suppose they ever go out anywhere."

"I don't think they do;—except to church."

"You can't very well ask her there. You can always knock at the house-door."

"I can call again once;—but what if I am refused then? It is of no use knocking if a man does not get in." After a little more conversation the squire was so far persuaded that he assented to the proposed marriage as far as his assent was required; but he did not see his way to give any assistance. He could only suggest that his son should go direct to the father and make his proposition in the old-fashioned legitimate fashion. But when it was put to him whether Mr. Bolton would not certainly reject the offer unless it were supported by some goodwill on the part of his own daughter, he acknowledged that it might probably be so. "You see," said the squire, "he believes in gold, but he doesn't believe in gold mines."

"It is that accursed Davis that stands against me," said the son.

John Caldigate, no doubt, had many things to trouble him. Before he had resolved on making his second visit to Chesterton, he received a most heart-rending

epistle from Aunt Polly in which he was assured that he was quite as dear to her as ever, quite as dear as her own children, and in which he was implored to return to the haunts of his childhood where everybody loved him and admired him. After what had passed, he was determined not to revisit the haunts till he was married, or, at any rate, engaged to be married. But there was a difficulty in explaining this to Aunt Polly without an appearance of ingratitude. And then there were affairs in Australia which annoyed him. Tom Crinkett was taking advantage of his absence in reference to Polyeuka,—so that his presence would soon be required there;—and other things were not going quite smoothly. He had much to trouble him;—but still he was determined to carry out his purpose with Hester Bolton. Since the day on which he had roused himself to the necessity of an active life he had ever called upon himself “not to let the grass grow under his feet.” And he had taught himself to think that there were few things a man could not achieve if he would only live up to that motto. Therefore, though he was perplexed by letters from Australia, and though his Aunt Polly was a great nuisance, he determined to persevere at once. If he allowed himself to revisit Nobble before he had settled this matter with Hester Bolton, would it not be natural that Hester Bolton should be the wife of some other man before he returned?

With all this on his mind he started off one day on horseback to Cambridge. When he left Folking he had not quite made up his mind whether he would go direct to the bank and ask for old Mr. Bolton, or make a first attempt at that fortified castle at Chesterton. But on entering the town he put his horse up at an inn just where the road turns off to Chesterton, and pro-

ceeded on foot to the house. This was about a mile distant from the stable, and as he walked that mile he resolved that if he could get into the house at all he would declare his purpose to someone before he left it. What was the use of shilly-shallying? "Who ever did anything by letting the grass grow under his feet?" So he knocked boldly at the door and asked for Mrs. Bolton. After a considerable time, the maid came and told him, apparently with much hesitation, that Mrs. Bolton was at home. He was quite determined to ask for Miss Bolton if Mrs. Bolton were denied to him. But the girl said that Mrs. Bolton was at home, seeming by her manner to say at the same time, "I cannot tell a lie about it, because of the sin; but I don't know what business you can have here, and I'm sure that my mistress does not want to see any such a one as you." Nevertheless she showed him into the big sitting-room on the left hand of the hall, and as he entered he saw the skirts of a lady's dress vanishing through another door. Had there been a moment allowed him he would boldly have called the lady back, for he was sure that the lady was Hester;—but the lady was gone, and the door closed before he could open his mouth.

Then he waited for full ten minutes, which, of course, seemed to him to be very much more than an hour. At last the door was opened and Mrs. Bolton appeared. The reader is not to suppose that she was an ugly, cross-looking old woman. She was neither ugly, nor old, nor cross. When she had married Mr. Bolton, she had been quite young, and now she was not much past forty. And she was handsome too, with a fine oval face which suited well with the peculiar simplicity of her dress and the sober seriousness of her gait and manner. It might, perhaps, be said of her that she

tried to look old and ugly,—and cross too, but that she did not succeed. She now greeted her visitor very coldly, and having asked after old Mr. Caldigate, sat silent looking at John Caldigate as though there were nothing more possible for her to say.

“I could not but come to see you and thank you for your kindness before I went,” said John.

“I remember your coming about some business. We have very few visitors here.”

“I went out, you know, as a miner.”

“I think I heard Mr. Bolton say so.”

“And I have succeeded very well.”

“Oh, indeed!”

“So well that I have been able to come back; and though I may perhaps be obliged to revisit the colony to settle my affairs there, I am going to live here at home.”

“I hope that will be comfortable to you.” At every word she spoke, her voice took more and more plainly that tone of wonder which we are all of us apt to express when called on to speak on matters which we are at the moment astonished to have introduced to us.

“Yes; Mrs. Bolton, I hope it will. And now I have got something particular to say.”

“Perhaps you had better see—Mr. Bolton, at the bank.”

“I hope I may be able to do so. I quite intend it. But as I am here, if you will allow me, I will say a word to you first. In all matters there is nothing so good as being explicit.” She looked at him as though she was altogether afraid of him. And indeed she was. Her husband’s opinion of the young man had been very bad five years ago,—and she had not heard that it had been altered since. Young men who went out to the

colonies because they were ruined, were, to her thinking, the worst among the bad,—men who drank and gambled and indulged in strange lives, mere cast-aways, the adopted of Satan. And, to her thinking, among men, none were so rough as miners,—and among miners none were so godless, so unrestrained, so wild as the seekers after gold. She had read, perhaps, something of the Spaniards in Central America, and regarded such adventurers as she would pirates and freebooters generally. And then with regard to the Caldigates generally,—the elder of whom she knew to have been one of her husband's intimate friends in his less regenerate days,—she believed them to be infidel free-thinkers. She was not, therefore, by any means predisposed in favour of this young man; and when he spoke of his desire to be explicit, she thought that he had better be explicit anywhere rather than in her drawing-room. "You may remember," he said, "that I had the pleasure of meeting your daughter here before I left the country five years ago." Then she listened with all her ears. There were not many things in this empty, vain, hard unattractive world which excited her. But the one thing in regard to which she had hopes and fears, doubts and resolutions,—the one matter as to which she knew that she must ever be on her guard, and yet as to which she hardly knew how she was to exercise her care,—was her child. "And once I have seen her since I have been back, though only for a moment." Then he paused as though expecting that she should say something;—but what was it possible that she should say? She only looked at him with all her eyes, and retreated a little from him with her body, as anxious to get away from a man of his class who should dare even to speak to her of her girl. "The

truth is, Mrs. Bolton, that her image has been present to me through all my wanderings, and I am here to ask her to be my wife." She rose from her chair as though to fly from him,—and then sitting down again stared at him with her mouth open and her eyes fixed upon him. His wife! Her Hester to become the wife of such a one as that! Her girl, as to whom, when thinking of the future life of her darling, she had come to tell herself that there could be no man good enough, pure enough, true enough, firm enough in his faith and life, to have so tender, so inestimable a treasure committed to his charge!

CHAPTER XVIII

ROBERT BOLTON

CALDIGATE felt at the moment that he had been very abrupt,—so abrupt as to have caused infinite dismay. But then it had been necessary that he should be abrupt in order that he might get the matter understood. The ordinary approaches were not open to him, and unless he had taken a more than usually rapid advantage of the occasion which he had made for himself, he would have had to leave the house without having been able to give any of its inmates the least idea of his purpose. And then,—as he said to himself,—matrimony is honest. He was in all worldly respects a fit match for the young lady. To his own thinking there was nothing preposterous in the nature of his request, though it might have been made with some less precipitate informality. He did not regard himself exactly as the lady regarded him, and therefore though he saw her surprise he still hoped that he might be able to convince her that in all that he was doing he was as anxious for the welfare of her child as she could be herself.

She sat there so long without saying a word that he found himself obliged to renew his suit. "Of course, Mrs. Bolton, I am aware how very little you know of me."

"Nothing at all," she answered, hurriedly;—"or rather too much."

He blushed up to his eyes, perfectly understanding

the meaning of her words; and, knowing that he had not deserved them, he was almost angry. "If you will make inquiry I think you will find that I have so far succeeded as to justify you in hoping that I may be able to marry and settle myself in my own country."

"You don't know my daughter at all."

"Very little."

"It is quite out of the question. She is very young, and such a thing has never occurred to her. And we are not the same sort of people."

"Why not, Mrs. Bolton? Your husband and my father have been intimate friends for a great many years. It is not as though I had taken up the idea only yesterday. It has been present with me, comforting me, during all my work, for the last five years. I know all your daughter's features as though she had been my constant companion." The lady shivered and almost trembled at this profanation of her child's name. It was trouble to her that one so holy should ever have been thought about by one so unholy. "Of course I do not ask anything at present;—but will you not consult your husband as to the propriety of allowing her to make my acquaintance?"

"I shall tell my husband, of course."

"And will repeat to him what I say?"

"I shall tell him,—as I should any other most wild proposition that might be made to me. But I am quite sure that he will be very angry."

"Angry! why should he be angry?"

"Because——" Then she stopped.

"I do not think, Mrs. Bolton, that there can be any cause for anger. If I were a beggar, if I were below her in position, if I had not means to keep a wife,—even if I were a stranger to his name, he might be

angry. But I do not think he can be angry with me, now, because, in the most straightforward way, I come to the young lady's parents and tell them that I love their child. Is it a disgrace to me that of all whom I have seen I think her to be the loveliest and best? Her father may reject me; but he will be very unreasonable if he is angry with me."

She could not tell him about the dove and the kite, or the lamb and the wolf. She could not explain to him that he was a sinner, unregenerated, a wild man in her estimation, a being of quite another kind than herself, and therefore altogether unfitted to be the husband of her girl! Her husband, no doubt, could do all this—if he would. But then she too, had her own skeleton in her own cupboard. She was not quite assured of her own husband's regeneration. He went to church regularly, and read his Bible, and said his prayers. But she feared,—she was almost sure,—that he liked the bank-books better than his Bible. That he would reject this offer from John Caldigate, she did not doubt. She had always heard her husband speak of the man with disapprobation and scorn. She had heard the whole story of Davis and the Newmarket debts. She had heard, too, the man's subsequent prosperity spoken of as a thing of chance,—as having come from gambling on an extensive scale. She herself regarded money acquired in so unholy a way as likely to turn to slate-stones, or to fly away and become worse than nothing. She knew that Mr. Bolton, whether regenerated or not, regarded young Caldigate as an adventurer, and that therefore, the idea of such a marriage would be as unpalatable to him as to herself. But she did not dare to tell her visitor that he was an unregenerate kite, lest her husband would not support her.

"Whatever more you have got to say, you had better say it to him," she replied to the lover when he had come to the end of his defence. At that moment the door opened, and a gentleman entered the room. This was Mr. Robert Bolton, the attorney. Now of all her husband's sons,—who were, of course, not her sons,—Mrs. Bolton saw this one the most frequently and perhaps liked him the least. Or it might be juster to say that she was more afraid of him than of the others. The two eldest, who were both in the bank, were quiet, sober men, who lived affluently and were married to religious wives, and brought up their children plentifully and piously. She did not see very much of them, because her life was not a social life. But among her friends they were the most intimate. But Robert's wife was given to gaiety and dinner-parties, and had been seen even at balls. And Robert himself was much oftener at the Grange than either of the other brothers. He managed his father's private affairs, and was, perhaps, of all his sons the best liked by the father. He was prosperous in his business, and was reported to be the leading lawyer in the town. In the old Cambridge days he had entertained John Caldigate at his house, and though they had not met since the miner's return from Australia, each at once knew the other, and their greeting was friendly. "Where's Hess?" said Robert, asking at once after his sister.

"She is engaged, Robert," said Mrs. Bolton, very seriously, and very firmly.

"She gave me a commission about some silk, and Margaret says that it can't be executed in Cambridge. She must write to Fanny." Margaret was Mrs. Robert Bolton, and Fanny was the wife of the barrister brother who lived in London.

"I will tell her, Robert."

"All the same I should have liked to have seen her."

"She is engaged, Robert." This was said almost more seriously and more firmly than before.

"Well, Caldigate," said the attorney, turning to the visitor, "so you are the one man who has not only gone to the gold country and found gold, but has brought his gold home with him."

"I have brought a little home;—but I hope others have done so before."

"I have never heard of any. You seem to have been uncommonly lucky. Hard work, wasn't it?"

"Hard enough at first."

"And a good deal of chance?"

"If a man will work steadily, and has backbone enough to stand up against reverses without consoling himself with drink; and if, when the gold comes, he can refrain from throwing it about as though it were endless, I think a man may be tolerably sure to earn something." Then he told the story of the horse with the golden shoes.

"Shoes of gold upon a horse!" said Mrs. Bolton, holding up both her hands. The man who could even tell such a story must be an adventurer. But, nevertheless, the story had interested her so that she had been enticed into taking some part in the conversation.

When Caldigate got up to take his leave, Robert Bolton offered to walk back to the town with him. He had expected to find his father, but would now look for him at the bank. They started together; and as they went Caldigate told his story to the young lady's half-brother. It occurred to him that of all the family Robert Bolton would be the most reasonable in such a matter; and that

of all the family he might perhaps be the best able to give assistance. When Robert Bolton had heard it all, at first he whistled. Then he asked the following question. "What did she say to you?"

"She did not give me much encouragement."

"I should think not. Though I say it who shouldn't, Hester is the sweetest girl in Cambridgeshire. But her mother thinks her much too good to be given in marriage to any man. This kind of thing was bound to come about some day."

"But Mrs. Bolton seems to have some personal objection to me."

"That's probable."

"I don't know why she should."

"She has got one treasure of her own, in enjoying which she is shut out from all the rest of the world. Is it unnatural that she should be a little suspicious about a man who proposes to take her treasure away from her?"

"She must surrender her treasure to someone,—some day."

"If it be so, she will hope to do so to a man of whose antecedents she may know more than she does of yours. What she does know of you is of a nature to frighten her. You will excuse me."

"Oh, of course."

"She has heard that you went away under a cloud, having surrendered your estate. That was against you. Well;—you have come back, and she hears that you have brought some money with you. She does not care very much about money; but she does care about regularity and fixed habits. If Hess is to be married at all she would especially wish that her husband should be a religious man. Perhaps you are."

"I am neither the one thing nor the other,—especially."

"And therefore peculiarly dangerous in her eyes. It is natural that she should oppose you."

"What am I to do, then?"

"Ah! How am I to answer that? The whole story is very romantic, and I do not know that we are a romantic family. My father is autocratic in his own house."

This last assurance seemed to contain some comfort. As Mrs. Bolton would be his enemy in the matter, it was well that the power of deciding should be in other hands. "I do not mean to give it up," said he.

"I suppose you must if they won't open their doors to you."

"I think they ought to allow me to have the chance of seeing her."

"I don't see why they should. Mind I am not saying anything of this for myself. If I were my sister's guardian, I should take the trouble to make many inquiries before I either asked you into my house or declined to do so. I should not give access to you or to any other gentleman merely because he asked it."

"Let them make inquiry."

"Mrs. Bolton probably thinks that she already knows enough. What my father may say I cannot even surmise."

"Will you tell him?"

"If you wish it."

"Tell him also that I will wait upon him at once if he desires it. He shall know everything about my affairs,—which indeed require no concealment. I can settle enough upon her for her comfort. If she is to have anything of her own, that will be over and above.

As far as I am concerned myself, I ask no question about that. I think that a man ought to earn enough for himself and for his wife too. As to religion——”

“If I were you, I would leave that alone,” said the lawyer.

“Perhaps so.”

“I will tell my father. That is all I can say. Good-bye.”

So they parted; and Caldigate, getting on his horse, rode back to Folking. Looking back at what he had done that day, he was almost disposed to be contented with it. The lady's too evident hostility was, of course, to be deprecated;—but then he had expected it. As Robert Bolton had explained to him very clearly, it was almost impossible that he should, at the first, be regarded by her with favourable eyes. But he thought that the brother had been quite as favourable to him as he could have expected, and the ice was broken. The Bolton family generally would know what he was about. Hester would not be told, of course;—at any rate, not at once. But the first steps had been taken, and it must be for him now so to press the matter that the ultimate decision should be made to rest in her hands as soon as possible.

“What did Mr. Bolton say to you?” asked the squire.

“I did not see him.”

“And what did the young lady say?”

“I did not see her.”

“Or the mamma?”

“I did see her, and told her my project.”

“I should think she would be startled?”

“She was not very propitious, sir; but that was not to be expected.”

"She is a poor melancholy half-crazed creature, I take it," said the squire; "at least, that is what I hear. The girl, I should think, would be glad to get away from such a home. But I am afraid you will find a good many obstacles." After that nothing more was said about the matter at Folking for some days.

But there was a great deal said upon the matter both in Cambridge and at Chesterton. Robert Bolton found his father at the bank on the same afternoon, and performed his promise. "Did he see your step-mother?" asked the old man.

"Oh yes; and as far as I can understand, did not receive very much favour at her hands."

"But he did not see Hester?"

"Certainly not to-day."

Then the old man looked up into his son's face, as though seeking some expression there from which he might take some counsel. His own nature had ever been imperious; but he was old now, and, in certain difficulties which environed him, he was apt to lean on his son Robert. It was Robert who encouraged him still to keep in his hands some share of the management of the bank; and it was to Robert that he could look for counsel when the ceremonious strictness of his wife at home became almost too hard even for him.

"It is natural to suppose that Hester should be married some day," said the lawyer.

"Her mother will never wish it."

"She will never wish it at any given moment, but she would probably assent to the proposition generally. Why not Hester as well as another girl? It is the happiest life for women."

"I am not sure. I am not sure."

"Women think so themselves, and Hester will prob-

ably be the same as others. She will, of course, have an opinion of her own."

"She will be guided by her mother."

"Not altogether. It will only be fair that she should be consulted on a matter of such importance to herself."

"You would not tell her what this man has been saying?"

"Not necessarily. I say that she should be consulted generally as to her future life. In regard to this man, I see no objection to him if he be a good man."

"He was here at college. You know what he did then?"

"Yes; and I know, too, something of what he has done since. He went away disinherited and almost degraded. He has come back, as I hear, comparatively a rich man. He has got back his inheritance, which might probably be settled on his children if he were to be married. And all this he has done off his own bat. Where other men stumble so frequently, he has stood on his legs. No doubt, he has lived with rough people, but still he seems to be a gentleman. Hester will be well off, no doubt, some day."

"She will have something,—something," said the old man.

"But this suitor asks for nothing. It is not as though he were coming to you to prop him up in the world. It does not look like that at least. Of course, we ought to make inquiry as to his means."

"The mortgage has been paid off."

"So much we know, and the rest may be found out. I do not mean at all to say that he should be allowed to have his own way. I think too much of my sister for that. But, in this matter, we ought to regard simply her happiness and her welfare;—and in considering

that you ought to be prepared for her coming marriage. You may take it for granted that she will choose to give herself, sooner or later, to some man. Give a girl good looks, and good sense, and good health, and she is sure to wish to be some man's wife,—unless she be deterred by some conventual superstition.”

If there were any words capable of conveying horror to the mind of the old banker, they were convents, priests, and papacy,—of which the lawyer was well aware when speaking thus of his sister. Mrs. Bolton was certainly not addicted to papistical observances, nor was she at all likely to recommend the seclusion of her daughter in a convent. All her religious doctrines were those of the Low Church. But she had a tendency to arrive at similar results by other means. She was so afraid of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that she would fain shut up her child so as to keep her from the reach of all evil. Vowed celibacy was abominable to her, because it was the resource of the Roman Catholics; and because she had been taught to believe that convent-walls were screens for hiding unheard of wickedness. But yet, on behalf of her child, she desired seclusion from the world, fancying that so and so only might security be ensured. Superstition was as strong with her as with any self-flagellated nun. Fasting, under that name, she held in abhorrence. But all sensual beatifications were wicked in her sight. She would allow all home indulgences to her daughter, each under some separate plea,—constrained to do so by excessive love; but she did so always in fear and trembling, lest she was giving some foothold to Satan. All of which Robert Bolton understood better even than did his father when he gave the above advice in reference to this lover.

CHAPTER XIX

MEN ARE SO WICKED

A MONTH had passed by since Caldigate's interview with Mrs. Bolton, and nothing had as yet been decided either for him or against him at Chesterton. And the fact that no absolute decision had been made against him may be taken as having been very much in his favour. But of those who doubted, and doubting, had come to no decision, Mrs. Bolton herself was by no means one. She was as firm as ever in her intention that the idea should not even be suggested to her daughter. Nor, up to this time, had our hero's name been even mentioned to Hester Bolton.

About a week after Caldigate's visit to Chesterton, in the early days of August, he wrote to Robert Bolton saying that he was going into Scotland for a month, and that he trusted that during that time his proposition might be considered. On his return he would take the liberty of calling on Mr. Bolton at the bank. In the meantime he hoped that inquiries might be made as to his position in the world, and in order that such inquiries might be effectual he gave a reference to his man of business in London. To this letter Robert Bolton sent no answer; but he went up to London, and did make the inquiries as suggested, and consulted his brother the barrister, and his sister-in-law the barrister's wife. They were both of opinion that John Caldigate was behaving well, and were of opinion also that some-

thing should be done to liberate Hester from the thralldom of her mother. "I knew how it would be when she grew up and became a woman," said Mrs. William Bolton. "Nobody will be allowed to see her, and she won't have a chance of settling herself. When we asked her to come up here for a couple of months in the season, Mrs. Bolton sent me word that London is a terrible place for young girls,—though, of course, she knew that our own girls were being brought up here." Then the ways of Mrs. Bolton at Chesterton and Hester's future life generally were discussed in a spirit that was by no means unfriendly to our hero.

The suggested inquiries were made in the city, and were all favourable. Everyone connected with the mining interests of the Australian colonies knew the name of John Caldigate. All of that class of people were well aware of his prosperity and confirmed good-fortune. He had brought with him or sent home nobody quite knew how much money. But it was very well known that he had left his interest in the Poly-euka mine to be sold for £60,000, and now there had come word that a company had created itself for the sake of making the purchase, and that the money would be forthcoming. The gentleman in the city connected with mining matters did not think that Mr. Caldigate would be called upon to go out to the colony again, unless he chose to do so for his own pleasure. All this Robert Bolton learned in the city, and he learned also that the man as to whom he was making inquiry was held in high esteem for honesty, perseverance, and capacity. The result of all this was that he returned to Cambridge with a feeling that his sister ought to be allowed to make the man's acquaintance. He and his brother had agreed that something should be done to

liberate their sister from her present condition. Love on the part of a mother may be as injurious as cruelty, if the mother be both tyrannical and superstitious. While Hester had been a child, no interference had been possible or perhaps expedient,—but the time had now come when something ought to be done. Such having been the decision in Harley Street, where the William Boltons lived, Robert Bolton went back home with the intention of carrying it out.

This could only be done through the old man, and even with him not without great care. He was devotedly attached to his young wife;—but was very averse to having it thought that he was ruled by her. Indeed, in all matters affecting his establishment, his means, and his business, he would hardly admit of interference from her at all. His worldly matters he kept between himself and his sons. But in regard to his soul he could not restrain her, and sometimes would hardly oppose her. The prolonged evening prayers, the sermons twice a week, the two long church services on Sundays,—indulgence as to the third being allowed to him only on the score of his age,—he endured at her command. And in regard to Hester, he had hitherto been ruled by his wife, thinking it proper that a daughter should be left in the hands of her mother. But now, when he was told that if he did not interfere, his girl would be constrained by the harsh bonds of an unnatural life, stern as he was himself and inclined to be gloomy, little as he was disposed to admit ideas of recreation and delight, he did acknowledge that something should be done to relieve her. “But when I die she must be left in her mother’s hands,” said the old banker.

“It is to be hoped that she may be in other hands

before that," replied his son. "I do not mean to say anything against my stepmother;—but for a young woman it is generally best that she should be married. And in Hester's peculiar position, she ought to have the chance of choosing for herself."

In this way something almost like a conspiracy was made on behalf of Caldigate. And yet the old man did not as yet abandon his prejudices against the miner. A man who had at so early an age done so much to ruin himself, and had then sprung so suddenly from ruin to prosperity, could not, he thought, be regarded as a steady well-to-do man of business. He did agree that, as regarded Hester, the prison-bars should be removed; but he did not think that she should be invited to walk forth with Mr. John Caldigate. Robert declared that his sister was quite able to form an opinion of her own, and boldly suggested that Hester should be allowed to come and dine at his house. "To meet the man?" asked the banker in dismay. "Yes," said Robert. "He isn't an ogre. You needn't be afraid of him. I shall be there,—and Margaret. Bring her yourself if you are afraid of anything. No plant ever becomes strong by being kept always away from the winds of heaven." To this he could not assent at the time. He knew that it was impossible to assent without consulting his wife. But he was brought so far round as to think that if nothing but his own consent were wanting, his girl would be allowed to go and meet the ogre.

"I suppose we ought to wish that Hester should be married some day," he said to his wife about this time. She shuddered and dashed her hands together as though deprecating some evil,—some event which she could hardly hope to avoid but which was certainly an evil. "Do you not wish that yourself?" She shook her

head. "Is it not the safest condition in which a woman can live?"

"How shall anyone be safe among the dangers of this world, Nicholas?" She habitually called her husband by his Christian name, but she was the only living being who did so.

"More safe then?" said he. "It is the natural condition of a woman."

"I do not know. Sin is natural."

"Very likely. No doubt. But marriage is not sinful."

"Men are so wicked."

"Some of them are."

"Where is there one that is not steeped in sin over his head?"

"That applies to women also; doesn't it?" said the banker petulantly. He was almost angry because she was introducing a commonplace as to the world's condition into a particular argument as to their daughter's future life,—which he felt to be unfair and illogical.

"Of course it does, Nicholas. We are all black and grimed with sin, men and women too; and perhaps something more may be forgiven to men because they have to go out into the world and do their work. But neither one or the other can be anything but foul with sin;—except,—except——"

He was quite accustomed to the religious truth which was coming, and, in an ordinary way, did not object to the doctrine which she was apt to preach to him often. But it had no reference whatever to the matter now under discussion. The general condition of things produced by the fall of Adam could not be used as an argument against matrimony generally. Wicked as men and women are it is so evidently intended that they

should marry and multiply, that even she would not deny the general propriety of such an arrangement. Therefore when he was talking to her about their daughter, she was ill-treating him when on that occasion she flew away to her much accustomed discourse.

"What's the use, then, of saying that men are wicked?"

"They are. They are!"

"Not a doubt about it. And so are the women. But they've got to have husbands and wives. They wouldn't be any the better if there were no marrying. We have to suppose that Hester will do the same as other girls."

"I hope not, Nicholas."

"But why not?"

"They are vain, and they adorn themselves, not in modest apparel, as St. Paul says in first Timothy, chapter second, nor with shame-facedness and sobriety; but with braided hair and gold and pearls and costly array."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Oh, Nicholas!"

"She might be married without all those things."

"You said you wanted her to be like other girls."

"No, I didn't. I said she would have to get married like other girls. You don't want to make a nun of her."

"A nun! I would sooner sit by her bedside and watch her die! My Hester a nun!"

"Very well, then. Let her go out into the world——"

"The world, Nicholas! The world, the flesh, and the devil! Do they not always go together?"

He was much harassed and very angry. He knew how unreasonable she was and yet he did not know how

to answer her. And she was dishonest with him. Because she felt herself unable to advocate in plain terms a thorough shutting up of her daughter,—a protecting of her from the temptation of sin by absolute and prolonged sequestration,—therefore she equivocated with him, pretending to think that he was desirous of sending his girl out to have her hair braided and herself arrayed in gold and pearls. It was thoroughly dishonest, and he understood the dishonesty. "She must go somewhere," he said, rising from his chair and closing the conversation. At this time a month had passed since Caldigate had been at Chesterton, and he had now returned from Scotland to Folking.

On the following day Hester was taken out to dinner at The Nurseries, as Robert Bolton's house was called,—was taken out by her father. This was quite a new experiment, as she had never dined with any of her aunts and cousins except at an early dinner almost as a child,—and even as a child not at her brother Robert's. But the banker, after having declared that she must go somewhere, had persisted. It is not to be supposed that Caldigate was on this occasion invited to meet her;—nor that the father had as yet agreed that any such meeting should be allowed. But as William Bolton,—the London brother,—and Mrs. William and one of their girls were down at Cambridge, it was arranged that Hester should meet her relatives. Even so much as this was not settled without much opposition on the part of Hester's mother.

There was nobody at the house but members of the family. The old banker's oldest son Nicholas was not there as his wife and Mrs. Robert did not get on well together. Mrs. Nicholas was almost as strict as Mrs. Bolton herself, and having no children of her own,

would not have sympathised at all in any desire to procure for Hester the wicked luxury of a lover. The second son Daniel joined the party with his wife, but he had married too late to have grown-up children. His wife was strict too,—but of a medium strictness. Teas, concerts, and occasional dinner parties were with her permissible;—as were also ribbons and a certain amount of costly array. Mrs. Nicholas was in the habit of telling Mrs. Daniel that you cannot touch pitch and not be defiled,—generally intending to imply that Mrs. Robert was the pitch; and would harp on the impossibility of serving both God and mammon, thinking perhaps that her brother-in-law Robert and mammon were one and the same. But Daniel, who could go to church as often as any man on Sundays, and had thoroughly acquired for himself the reputation of a religious man of business, had his own ideas as to proprieties and expediencies, and would neither quarrel with his brother Robert, or allow his wife to quarrel with Mrs. Robert. So that the Nicholases lived very much alone. Mrs. Nicholas and Mrs. Bolton might have suited each other, might have been congenial and a comfort each to the other, but the elder son and the elder son's wife had endeavoured to prevent the old man's second marriage, and there had never been a thorough reconciliation since. There are people who can never forgive. Mrs. Nicholas had never forgiven the young girl for marrying the old man, and the young girl had never forgiven the opposition of her elder step-daughter-in-law to her own marriage. Hence it had come to pass that the Nicholases were extruded from the family conclaves, which generally consisted of the Daniels and the Roberts. The Williams were away in London, not often having much to do with these mat-

ters. But they too allied themselves with the dominant party, it being quite understood that as long as the old man lived Robert was and would be the most potent member of the family.

When the father and the three sons were in the dining-room together, after the six or seven ladies had left them, the propriety of allowing John Caldigate to make Hester's acquaintance was fully discussed. "I would not for the world interfere," said Robert, "if I did not think it unfair to the dear girl that she should be shut up there altogether."

"Do you suppose that the young man is in earnest?" asked Daniel.

As to this they all agreed that there could be no doubt. He was, too, an old family friend, well-to-do in the world, able to make proper settlements, and not at all greedy as to a fortune with his wife. Even Daniel Bolton thought that the young man should have a chance,—by saying which he was supposed to declare that the question ought to be left to the arbitrament of the young lady. The old banker was unhappy and ill at ease. He could not reconcile himself at once to so great a change. Though he felt that the excessive fears of his wife, if indulged, would be prejudicial to their girl, still he did not wish to thrust her out into the world all at once. Could there not be some middle course. Could there not be a day named, some four years hence, at which she might be allowed to begin to judge for herself? But his three sons were against him, and he could not resist their joint influence. It was therefore absolutely decided that steps should be taken for enabling John Caldigate to meet Hester at Robert Bolton's house.

"I suppose it will end in a marriage," William Bol-

ton said to his brother Robert when they were alone.

"Of course it will. She is the dearest creature in the world;—so good to her mother; but no fool, and quite aware that the kind of restraint to which she has been subjected is an injustice. Of course she will be gratified when a man like that tells her that he loves her. He is a good-looking fellow, with a fine spirit and plenty of means. How on earth can she do better?"

"But Mrs. B.?" said William, who would sometimes thus disrespectfully allude to his step-mother.

"Mrs. B. will do all she can to prevent it," said Robert; "but I think we shall find that Hester has a will of her own."

On the following day John Caldigate called at the bank, where the banker had a small wainscoted back parlour appropriated to himself. He had already promised that he would see the young man, and Caldigate was shown into the little room. He soon told his story, and was soon clever enough to perceive that the telling of his story was at any rate permitted. The old father did not receive him with astonishment and displeasure combined, as the mother had done. Of course he made difficulties, and spoke of the thing as being beyond the bounds of probability. But objection no stronger than that may be taken as amounting almost to encouragement in such circumstances. And he paid evident attention to all that Caldigate said about his own pecuniary affairs;—going so far as to say that he was not in a condition to declare whether he would give his daughter any fortune at all on her marriage

"It is quite unnecessary," said Caldigate.

"She will probably have something at my death," rejoined the old man.

"And when may I see her?" asked Caldigate.

In answer to that Mr. Bolton would not at first make any suggestion whatsoever,—falling back upon his old fears, and declaring that there could be no such meetings at all, but at last allowing that the lover should discuss the matter with his son Robert.

"Perhaps I may have been mistaken about the young man Caldigate," the banker said to his wife that night.

"Oh, Nicholas!"

"I only say that perhaps I may have been mistaken."

"You are not thinking of Hester?"

"I said nothing about Hester then;—but perhaps I may have been mistaken in my opinion about that young man John Caldigate."

John Caldigate, as he rode home after his interview at the bank, almost felt that he had cleared away many difficulties, and that, by his perseverance, he might probably be enabled to carry out the dream of his earlier youth.

CHAPTER XX

HESTER'S COURAGE

AFTER that Caldigate did not allow the grass to grow under his feet, and before the end of November the two young people were engaged. As Robert Bolton had said, Hester was of course flattered and of course delighted with this new joy. John Caldigate was just the man to recommend himself to such a girl, not too light, not too prone to pleasure, not contenting himself with bicycles, cricket matches, or billiards, and yet not wholly given to serious matters as had been those among whom she had hitherto passed her days. And he was one who could speak of his love with soft winning words, neither roughly nor yet with too much of shame-faced diffidence. And when he told her how he had sworn to himself after seeing her that once,—that once when all before him in life was enveloped in doubt and difficulty,—that he would come home and make her his wife, she thought that the manly constancy of his heart was almost divine. Of course she loved him with all her heart. He was in all respects one made to be loved by a woman;—and then what else had she ever had to love? When once it was arranged that he should be allowed to speak to her, the thing was done. She did not at once tell him that it was done. She took some few short halcyon weeks to dally with the vow which her heart was ready to make; but those around her knew that the vow had been inwardly made; and those who were anxious on her behalf with a new anxiety,

with a new responsibility, redoubled their inquiries as to John Caldigate. How would Robert Bolton or Mrs. Robert excuse themselves to that frightened miserable mother if at last it should turn out that John Caldigate was not such as they had represented him to be?

But no one could pick a hole in him although many attempts to pick holes were made. The question of his money was put quite at rest by the transference of all his securities, balances, and documents to the Boltons' bank, and the £60,000 for Polyeuka was accepted, so that there was no longer any need that he should go again to the colony. This was sweet news to Hester when she first heard it;—for it had come to pass that it had been agreed that the marriage should be postponed till his return, that having been the one concession made to Mrs. Bolton. There had been many arguments about it;—but Hester at last told him that she had promised so much to her mother and that she would of course keep her promise. Then the arrangement took such a form that the journey was not necessary, —or perhaps the objection to the journey became so strong in Caldigate's mind that he determined to dispense with it at any price. And thus, very greatly to the dismay of Mrs. Bolton, suddenly there came to be no reason why they should not be married almost at once.

But there was an attempt made at the picking of holes,—or rather many attempts. It would be unfair to say that this was carried on by Mrs. Bolton herself; —but she was always ready to listen to what evil things were said to her. Mrs. Nicholas, in her horror at the general wickedness of the Caldigates, almost reconciled herself to her stepmother, and even Mrs. Daniel began to fear that a rash thing was being done. In the first

place there was the old story of Davis and Newmarket. Robert Bolton, who had necessarily become the advocate and defender of our hero generally, did not care much for Davis and Newmarket. All young men sow their wild oats. Of course he had been extravagant. Since his extravagance he had shown himself to be an industrious, sensible, steady member of society;—and there was the money that he had earned! What young man had earned more in a shorter time, or had ever been more prudent in keeping it? Davis and Newmarket were easily answered by a reference to the bank account. Did he ever go to Newmarket now, though he was living so close to it? On that matter Robert Bolton was very strong.

But Mrs. Nicholas had found out that Caldigate had spent certainly two Sundays running at Folking without going to church at all; and, as far as she could learn, he was altogether indifferent about public worship. Mrs. Bolton, who could never bring herself to treat him as a son-in-law, but who was still obliged to receive him, taxed him to his face with his paganism. "Have you no religion, Mr. Caldigate?" He assured her that he had, and fell into a long discussion in which he thoroughly confused her, though he by no means convinced her that he was what he ought to be. But he went with her to church twice on one Sunday, and showed her that he was perfectly familiar with the ways of the place.

But perhaps the loudest complaint came from the side of Babington; and here two sets of enemies joined their forces together who were thoroughly hostile to each other. Mrs. Babington declared loudly that old Bolton had been an errand-boy in his youth, and that his father had been a porter and his mother a washer-

woman. This could do no real harm, as Caldigate would not have been deterred by any such rumours, even had they been true; but they tended to show animosity, and enabled Mrs. Nicholas to find out the cause of the Babington opposition. When she learned that John Caldigate had been engaged to his cousin Julia, of course she made the most of it; and so did Mrs. Bolton. And in this way it came to be reported not only that the young man had been engaged to Miss Babington before he went to Australia,—but also that he had renewed his engagement since his return. “You do not love her, do you?” Hester asked him. Then he told her the whole story, as nearly as he could tell it with some respect for his cousin, laughing the while at his aunt’s solicitude, and saying, perhaps, something not quite respectful as to Julia’s red cheeks and green hat, all of which certainly had not the effect of hardening Hester’s heart against him. “The poor young lady can’t help it if her feet are big,” said Hester, who was quite alive to the grace of a well-made pair of boots, although she had been taught to eschew braided hair and pearls and gold.

Mrs. Babington, however, pushed her remonstrances so far that she boldly declared that the man was engaged to her daughter, and wrote to him more than once declaring that it was so. She wrote, indeed, very often, sometimes abusing him for his perfidy, and then, again, imploring him to return to them, and not to defile the true old English blood of the Caldigates with the suds of a washerwoman and the swept-up refuse of a porter’s shovel. She became quite eloquent in her denunciation, but always saying that if he would only come back to Babington all would be forgiven him. But in these days he made no visits to Babington.

Then there came a plaintive little note from Mrs. Shand. Of course they wished him joy if it were true. But could it be true? Men were very fickle, certainly; but this change seemed to have been very, very sudden! 'And there was a word or two, prettily written in another hand, on a small slip of paper—"Perhaps you had better send back the book;" and Caldigate, as he read it, thought that he could discern the almost-obiterated smudge of a wiped-up tear. He wrote a cheerful letter to Mrs. Shand, in which he told her that though he had not been absolutely engaged to marry Hetser Bolton before he started for Australia,—and consequently before he had ever been at Pollington,—yet his mind had been quite made up to do so; and that therefore he regarded himself as being abnormally constant rather than fickle. "And tell your daughter, with my kindest regards," he added, "that I hope I may be allowed to keep the book."

The Babington objections certainly made their way in Cambridge and out at Chesterton further than any others, and for a time did give a hope to Mrs. Bolton and Mrs. Nicholas,—and made Robert Bolton shrug his shoulders uneasily when he heard all the details of the engagement in the linen-closet. But there came at one moment a rumour, which did not count for much among the Boltons, but which disturbed Caldigate himself more than any of the other causes adduced for breaking off his intended marriage. Word came that he had been very intimate with a certain woman on his way out to Melbourne,—a woman supposed to be a foreigner and an actress; and the name of Cettini was whispered. He did not know whence the rumour came;—but on one morning Robert Bolton, half-laughing, but still with a tone of voice that was half-earnest,

taxed him with having as many loves as Lothario. "Who is Cettini?" asked Robert Bolton.

"Cettini?" said Caldigate, with a struggle to prevent a blush.

"Did you travel with such a woman?"

"Yes;—at least, if that was her name. I did not hear it till afterwards. A very agreeable woman she was."

"They say that you promised to marry her when on board."

"Then they lie. But that is a matter of course. There are so many lies going about that I almost feel myself to be famous."

"You did not see her after the journey?"

"Yes, I did. I saw her act at Sydney; and very well she acted. Have you anything else to ask?" Robert Bolton said that he had nothing else to ask,—and seemed, at the moment, to turn his half-serious mood into one that was altogether jocular. But the mention of the name had been a wound; and when an anonymous letter a few days afterwards reached Hester herself he was really unhappy. Hester made nothing of the letter—did not even show it to her mother. At that time a day had been fixed for their marriage; and she already regarded her lover as nearer to her than either father or mother. The letter purported to be from someone who had travelled with her lover and this woman on board ship, and declared that everybody on board the ship had thought that Caldigate meant to marry the woman,—who then, so said the letter, called herself Mrs. Smith. Hester showed the letter to Caldigate, and then Caldigate told his story. There had been such a woman, who had been much ill-treated because of her poverty. He had cer-

tainly taken the woman's part. She had been clever and, as he had thought, well-behaved. And no doubt, there had been a certain amount of friendship. He had seen her again in Sydney, where he had found her exercising her profession as an actress. That had been all. "I cannot imagine, dear," he said, "that you should be jealous of any woman; but certainly not of such a one as she." "Nor can I imagine," said Hester, stoutly, "that I could possibly be jealous of any woman." And then there was nothing more said about the woman Smith-Cettini.

During all this time there were many family meetings. Those between Mr. Caldigate, the father, and old Mr. Bolton were pleasant enough, though not peculiarly cordial. The banker, though he had been brought to agree to the marriage, had not been quite reconciled to it. His younger son had been able to convince him that it was his duty to liberate his daughter from the oppression of her mother's over vigilance, and all the rest had followed very quickly,—overwhelming him, as it were, by stern necessity. When once the girl had come to understand that she could have her own way, if she chose to have a way of her own, she very quickly took the matter into her own management. And in this way the engagement became a thing settled before the banker had realised the facts of the position. Though he could not be cordial he endeavoured to be gracious to his old friend. But Mrs. Bolton spoke words which made all friendship impossible. She asked old Mr. Caldigate after his soul, and when he replied to her less seriously than she thought becoming, she told him that he was in a bad way. And then she said things about the marriage which implied that she would sooner see her daughter in her grave than married to

a man who was no more than a professing Christian. The conversation ended in a quarrel, after which the squire would not go again to Puritan Grange.

There was indeed a time, an entire week, during which the mother and daughter hardly spoke to each other. In these days Mrs. Bolton continually demanded of her husband that he should break off the match, always giving as a reason the alleged fact that John Caldigate was not a true believer. It had been acknowledged between them that if such were the fact the man would be an unfit husband for their daughter. But they differed as to the fact. The son had over and over again declared himself to be a faithful member of the Church of England,—not very scrupulous perhaps in the performance of her ceremonies,—but still a believing member. That his father was not so everyone knew, but he was not responsible for his father. Mr. Bolton seemed to think that the argument was good;—but Mrs. Bolton was of opinion that to become willingly the daughter-in-law of an infidel, would be to throw oneself with one's eyes open in the way of perdition. Hester through all this declared that nothing should now turn her from the man she loved, "Not though he were an infidel himself?" said the terror-stricken mother. "Nothing!" said Hester, bravely. "Of course I should try to change him." A more wretched woman than Mrs. Bolton might not probably then have been found. She suddenly perceived herself to be quite powerless with the child over whom her dominion had hitherto been supreme. And she felt herself compelled to give way to people whom, with all her heart, she hated. She determined that nothing,—nothing should induce her to soften her feelings to this son-in-law who was forced upon her. The

man had come and had stolen from her her treasure, her one treasure. And that other man whom she had always feared and always hated, Robert Bolton, the man whose craft and worldliness had ever prevented her from emancipating her husband from the flesh and the devil, had brought all this about. Then she reconciled herself to her child, and wept over her, and implored heaven to save her. Hester tried to argue with her,—spoke of her own love,—appealed to her mother, asking whether, as she had now declared her love, it could be right that she should abandon a man who was so good and so fondly attached to her. Then Mrs. Bolton would hide her face, and sob, and put up renewed prayers to heaven that her daughter might not by means of this unhappy marriage become lost to all sense of grace.

It was very miserable, but still the prospect of the marriage was never abandoned nor postponed. A day had been settled a little before Christmas, and the Robert Boltons would allow of no postponement. The old man was so tormented by the misery of his own home that he himself was averse to delay. There could be no comfort for him till the thing should have been done. Mrs. Bolton had suggested that it should be put off till the spring;—but he had gloomily replied that as the thing had to be done, the sooner it was done the better.

It had been settled almost from the first that the marriage festival should be held, not at Puritan Grange, but at The Nurseries; and gradually it came to be understood that Mrs. Bolton would not be present herself, either at the church or at the breakfast. It was in vain that Hester implored her mother to yield to her in something, to stand with her at any rate on the

steps before the altar. "Would you wish me to go and lie before my God?" said the unhappy woman. "When I would give all that I have in the world except my soul,—my life, my name, even my child herself, to prevent this, am I to go and smile and be congratulated, and to look as though I were happy?" There was, therefore, very much unhappiness at the Grange, and an absence of all triumph even at The Nurseries. At the old bank-house in the town where the Nicholases lived, the marriage was openly denounced; and even the Daniels, though they were pledged to be present, were in doubt.

"I suppose it is all right," said Mrs. Robert to her husband.

"Of course it is all right. Why not?"

"It seems sad that such an event as a marriage should give rise to so much ill-feeling. I almost wish we had not meddled, Robert."

"I don't think there is anything to regret. Remember what Hester's position would have been if my father had died, leaving her simply to her mother's guardianship! We were bound to free her from that, and we have done it." This was all very well;—but still there was no triumph, no ringing of those inward marriage bells the sound of whose music ought to be so pleasant to both the families concerned.

There were, however, two persons quite firm to their purpose, and these were the bride and bridegroom. With him firmness was comparatively easy. When his father suggested that the whole Bolton family was making itself disagreeable, he could with much satisfaction reply that he did not intend to marry the whole Bolton family. Having answered the first letter or two he could ignore the Babington remonstrances. And

when he was cross-examined as to points of doctrine, he could with sincerity profess himself to be of the same creed with his examiners. If he went to church less often than old Mr. Bolton, so did old Mr. Bolton go less often than his wife. It was a matter as to which there was no rule. Thus his troubles were comparatively light, and his firmness might be regarded as a thing of course. But she was firm too, and firm amidst very different circumstances. Though her mother prayed and sobbed, implored her, and almost cursed her, still she was firm. She had given her word to the man, and her heart, and she would not go back. "Yes, papa. It is too late now," she said, when her father, coming from his wife, once suggested to her that even yet it was not too late. "Of course I shall marry him," she said to Mrs. Robert, almost with indignation, when Mrs. Robert on one occasion almost broke down in her purpose.

"Dear aunt, indeed, indeed, you need not interfere," she said to Mrs. Nicholas. "If he were all that they have called him, still I would marry him," she said to her other aunt,— "because I love him." And so they all became astonished at the young girl whom they had reared up among them, and to understand that whatever might now be their opinions, she would have her way.

And so it was decided that they should be married on a certain Tuesday in the middle of December. Early in the morning she was to be brought down to her aunt's house, there to be decked in her bridal robes, thence to be taken to the church, then to return for the bridal feast, and from thence to be taken off by her husband,—to go whither they might list.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WEDDING

It was a sad wedding, though everything within the power of Mr. Robert Bolton was done to make it gay. There was a great breakfast, and all the Boltons were at last persuaded to be present except Mrs. Bolton and Mrs. Nicholas. As to Mrs. Nicholas, she was hardly even asked. "Of course we would be delighted to see Mrs. Nicholas, if she would come," Mrs. Robert said to Nicholas himself. But there had been such long-continued and absolute hostility between the ladies that this was known to be impossible. In regard to Mrs. Bolton herself, great efforts were made. Her husband condescended to beg her to consent on this one occasion to appear among the Philistines. But as the time came nearer she became more and more firm in her resolution. "You shall not touch pitch and not be defiled," she said. "You cannot serve God and Mammon." When the old man tried to show her that there was no question of Mammon here, she evaded him, as she always did on such occasions, either by a real or simulated deficiency of consequent intelligence. She regarded John Caldigate as being altogether unregenerate, and therefore a man of the world,—and therefore a disciple of Mammon. She asked him whether he wanted her to do what she thought to be sinful. "It is very sinful hating people as you hate my sons' families," he said in his wrath. "No, Nicholas, I do not

hate their families. I certainly do not hate Margaret, nor yet Fanny;—but I think that they live in opposition to the Gospel. Am I to belie my own belief?" Now the old man was quite certain that his wife did hate both Robert's wife and William's, and would not admit in her own mind this distinction between the conduct of persons and the persons themselves. But he altogether failed in his attempt to induce her to go to the breakfast.

The great contest was between the mother and the daughter; but in all that passed between them no reference was even made to the banquet. As to that Hester was indifferent. She thought, on the whole, that her mother would do best to be absent. After all, what is a breakfast;—or what the significance of any merry-making, even for a wedding? There would no doubt be much said and much done on such an occasion at variance with her mother's feelings. Even the enforced gaiety of the dresses would be distasteful to her, and there would hardly be sufficient cause for pressing her to be present on such an occasion. But in reference to the church, the question, to Hester's thinking, was very different. "Mamma," she said, "if you are not there, it will be a lasting misery to me."

"How can I go there when I would give so much to save you from going there yourself?" This was a terrible thing for a mother to say to her own child on the eve of her wedding, but it had been now said so often as to have lost something of its sting. It had come to be understood that Mrs. Bolton would not allow herself to give any assent to the marriage, but that the marriage was to go on without such assent. All that had been settled. But still she might go to the church with them and pray for good results. She feared that

evil would come, but still she might wish for good,— wish for it and pray for it.

“You don’t want me to be unhappy, mamma?”

“Want!” said the mother. “Who can want her child to be unhappy? But there is an unhappiness harder to be borne, more to be dreaded, enduring so much longer than that which we may suffer here.”

“Will you not come and pray that I may be delivered also from that? As I am going from you, will you not let me know that you are there with me at the last moment. Though you do not love him, you do not wish to quarrel with me. Oh, mamma, let me feel at any rate that you are there.” Then the mother promised that she would be there, in the church, though unknown to or at least unrecognised by anyone else. When the morning came, and when Hester was dropped at The Nurseries, in order that she might go up and be invested in her finery amidst her bridesmaids, who were all her cousins, the carriage went on and took Mrs. Bolton to the church. It was represented to her that, by this arrangement, she would be forced to remain an hour alone in the cold building. But she was one of those who regarded all discomfort as meritorious, as in some way adding something to her claim for heaven. Self-scourging with rods as a penance was to her thinking a papistical ordinance most abominable and damnatory; but the essence of the self-scourging was as comfortable to her as ever was a hair-shirt to a Roman Catholic enthusiast. So she went and sat apart in a dark distant pew, dressed in black and deeply veiled, praying, not, it is to be feared, that John Caldigate might be a good husband to her girl, but that he, as he made his way downward to things below, might not drag her darling with him. That only a few can

be saved was the fact in all her religion with which she was most thoroughly conversant. The straight way and the narrow gate, through which only a few can pass! Were they not known to all believers, to all who had a glimmering of belief, as an established part of the Christian faith, as a part so established that to dream even that the gate would be made broad and the way open would be to dream against the Gospel, against the very plainest of God's words? If so,—and she would tell herself at all hours that certainly, certainly, certainly it was so,—then why should she trouble herself for one so little likely to come in the way of salvation as this man who was now robbing her of her daughter? If it was the will of the Almighty,—as it clearly was the will of the Almighty,—that, out of every hundred, ninety and nine should perish, could she dare now to pray more than for one? Or if her prayers were wider must they not be inefficacious? Yes;—there had been the thief upon the cross! It was all possible. But this man was a thief, not upon the cross. And, therefore, as she prayed that morning, she said not a prayer for him.

In the meantime the carriage had gone back for the bride, who in very simple raiment, but yet in bridal-white array, was taken up to the church. These Boltons were prosperous people, who had all their carriages, so that there was no lack of vehicles. Two of the girls from London and two from The Nurseries made up the bevy of bridesmaids, who were as bright and fair as though the bride had come from some worldlier stock. Mrs. Robert, indeed, had done all she could to give to the whole concern a becoming bridal brightness, till even Mrs. Daniel had been tempted to remonstrate. "I don't see why you shouldn't wear

pretty things if you've got the money to pay for them," said Mrs. Robert. Mrs. Daniel shook her head, but on the afternoon before the wedding she bought an additional ribbon.

Caldigate came over from Folking that morning attended by one John Jones, an old college friend, as his best man. The squire was not at the wedding, but on the day before he was with Hester at The Nurseries, telling her that she should be his dear daughter, and at the same time giving her a whole set of wicked but very pretty worldly gauds. "Upon my word, my dear, he has been very gracious," said Mrs. Robert, when she saw them. "I quite envy the girls being married nowadays, because they get such pretty things."

"They are very pretty," said Hester.

"And must have cost, I'm afraid to say, how much money."

"I suppose it means to say that he will love me, and therefore I am so glad to have them!" But the squire, though he did mean to say that he would love her, did not come to the wedding. He was, he said, unaccustomed to such things, and hoped that he might be excused.

Therefore, from the Folking side there was no one but John Caldigate himself and John Jones. Of the Babingtons, of course, there was not one. As long as there was a possibility of success Mrs. Babington had kept up her remonstrances;—but when there was no longer a possibility she announced that there was to be an everlasting quarrel between the houses. Babington and Folking were for the future to know nothing of each other. Caldigate had hoped that though the ladies would for a time be unforgiving, his uncle and his male cousins would not take up the quarrel. But Aunt Polly

was too strong for that; and he was declared to be a viper who had been warmed in all their bosoms and had then stung them all round. "If you will nurse a viper in your bosom of course he will sting you," said Aunt Polly in a letter which she took the trouble to write to the squire. In reply to which the squire wrote back thus: "My dear sister, if you will look into your dictionary of natural history you will see that vipers have no stings. Yours truly, D. Caldigate." This letter was supposed to add much to the already existing offence.

But the marriage ceremony was performed in spite of all this quarrelling, and the mother standing up in the dark corner of her pew heard her daughter's silver-clear voice as she vowed to devote herself to her husband. As she heard it, she also devoted herself. When sorrow should come as sorrow certainly would come, then she would be ready once again to be a mother to her child. But till that time should come the wife of John Caldigate would be nothing to her.

She was not content with thinking and resolving that it should be so, but she declared her intention in so many words to her daughter. For poor Hester, though she was proud of her husband, this was in truth a miserable day. Could she have been induced to separate herself altogether from her mother on the previous night, or even on that morning, it would have been better, but there was with her that customary longing for a last word of farewell which has often made so many of us wretched. And then there was a feeling that, as she was giving herself away in marriage altogether in opposition to her mother's counsels, on that very account she owed to her more attached and increased observance. Therefore, she had arranged with her husband that when she returned from the banquet to pre-

pare herself for her journey, a longer absence than usual should be allowed to her;—so that she might be taken back to Chesterton, and might thus see her mother the last after saying farewell to all the others. Then the carriage should return to The Nurseries and he would be ready to step in, and she need not show herself again, worn out as she would be with the tears and sobbings which she anticipated.

It all went as it was arranged, but it would have been much better to arrange it otherwise. The journey to the Grange and back, together with the time spent in the interview, took an hour,—and the time went very slowly with the marriage guests. There always comes a period beyond which it is impossible to be festive. When the bride left the room, the bridesmaids and other ladies went with her. Then the gentlemen who remained hardly knew what to do with each other. Old Mr. Bolton was not jovial on the occasion, and the four brothers hardly knew how to find subjects for conversation on such an occasion. The bridegroom felt the hour to be very long, although he consented to play billiards with the boys, and John Jones, although he did at last escape and find his way up among the girls, thought that his friend had married himself into a very sombre family. But all this was pleasant pastime indeed compared with that which poor Hester endured in her mother's bedroom. "So it has been done," said Mrs. Bolton, sitting in a comfortless little chair, which she was accustomed to use when secluded, with her Bible, from all the household. She spoke in a voice that might have been fit had a son of hers been just executed on the gallows.

"Oh, mamma, do not speak of it like that!"

"My darling, my own one; would you have me pre-

tend what I do not feel?" "Why, yes. Even that would be better than treatment such as this." That would have been Hester's reply could she have spoken her mind; but she could not speak it, and therefore she stood silent. "I will not pretend. You and your father have done this thing against my wishes and against my advice."

"It is I that have done it, mamma."

"You would not have persevered had he been firm,—as firm as I have been. But he has vacillated, turning hither and thither, serving God and Mammon. And he has allowed himself to be ruled by his own son. I will never, never speak to Robert Bolton again."

"Oh mamma, do not say that."

"I do say it. I swear it. You shall not touch pitch and not be defiled. If there be pitch on earth he is pitch. If your eye offend you, pluck it out. He is my stepson, I know; but I will pluck him out like an eye that has offended. It is he that has robbed me of my child."

"Am I not still your child?" said Hester, going down on her knees with her hands in her mother's lap and her eyes turned up to her mother's face.

"No. You are not mine any longer. You are his. You are that man's wife. When he bids you do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, you must do it. And he will bid you. You are not my child now. As days run on and sins grow black I cannot warn you now against the wrath to come. But though you are not my child, though you are this man's wife, I will pray for you."

"And for him?"

"I do not know. I cannot say. Who am I that I should venture to pray specially for a stranger? That

His way may be shown to all sinners;—thus will I pray for him. And it will be shown. Though whether he will walk in it,—who can say that?” So much was true of John Caldigate, no doubt, and is true of all; but there was a tone in her voice which implied that in regard to this special sinner there could be very little hope indeed.

“Why should you think that he is bad, mamma?”

“We are all bad. There is no doubt about his being bad. There is not one among us fit to sweep the lowest step of God’s throne. But they who are His people shall be made bright enough to sit round his feet. May the time come when you, my darling, shall be restored to the fold.” The poor young wife by this time had acknowledged to herself the mistake she had made in thus coming to her mother after her marriage. She now was of course in that ecstatic phase of existence which makes one’s own self altogether subordinate to the self of another person. That her husband should be happy constituted her hope of happiness; that he should be comfortable, her comfort. If he were thought worthy, that would be her worthiness; or if he were good, that would be her goodness. And even as to those higher, more distant aspirations, amidst which her mother was always dwelling, she would take no joy for herself which did not include him. The denunciations against him which were so plainly included even in her mother’s blessings and prayers for herself, did not frighten her on behalf of the man to whom she had devoted herself. She could see the fanaticism and fury of her mother’s creed. But she could not escape from the curse of the moment. When that last imprecation was made by the woman, with her hands folded and her eyes turned up to heaven, Hester could

only bury her face on her mother's knees and weep. "When that time comes, and I know it will come, you shall return to me, and once more be my child," said the mother.

"You do not mean that I shall leave my husband?"

"Who can tell? If you do, and I am living, you shall be my child. Till then we must be apart. How can it be otherwise? Can I give my cheek to a man to be kissed, and call him my son, when I think that he has robbed me of my only treasure?"

This was so terrible that the daughter could only hang around her mother's neck, sobbing and kissing her at the same time, and then go without another word. She was sure of this,—that if she must lose one or the other, her mother or her husband, then she would lose her mother. When she returned to The Nurseries, her husband, according to agreement, came out to her at once. She had bidden adieu to all the others; but at the last moment her father put his hand into the carriage, so that she could take it and kiss it. "Mamma is so sad," she said to him; "go home to her and comfort her." Of course the old man did go home, but he was aware that there would for some time be little comfort there either for him or for his wife. He and his sons had been too powerful for her in arranging the marriage; but now, now that it was done, nothing could stop her reproaches. He had been made to think it wrong on one side to shut his girl up, and now from the other side he was being made to think that he had done very wrong in allowing her to escape.

It had been arranged that they should be driven out of Cambridge to the railway station at Audley End on their way to London; so that they might avoid the

crowd of people who would know them at the Cambridge station. As soon as they had got away from the door of Robert Bolton's house, the husband attempted to comfort his young wife. "At any rate it is over," he said, alluding of course to the tedium of their wedding festivities.

"So much is over," she replied.

"You do not regret anything?"

She shook her head slowly as she leaned lovingly against his shoulder. "You are not sorry, Hester, that you have become my wife?"

"I had to be your wife,—because I love you."

"Is that a sorrow?"

"I had been all my mother's;—and now I am all yours. She has thrown me off because I have disobeyed her. I hope you will never throw me off."

"Is it likely?"

"I think not. I know that I shall never throw you off. They have tried to make me believe that you are not all that you ought to be—in religion. But now your religion shall be my religion, and your life my life. I shall be of your colour altogether. But, John, a limb cannot be wrenched out of a socket, as I have been torn away from my mother, without pain."

"She will forgive it all when we come back."

"I fear—I fear. I never knew her to forgive anything yet." This was very bad; but nevertheless it was plain to him as it had been plain to Robert and William Bolton, that not because of the violence of the woman's character should the life of her daughter have been sacrificed to her. His duty to make her new life bright for her was all the more plain and all the more sound,—and as they made their first journey together he explained to her how sacred that duty should always be to him.

CHAPTER XXII

AS TO TOUCHING PITCH

BEFORE the wedding old Mr. Caldigate arranged with his son that he would give up to the young married people the house at Folking, and indeed the entire management of the property. "I have made up my mind about it," said the squire, who at this time was living with his son on happy terms. "I have never been adapted for the life of a country gentleman," he continued, "though I have endeavoured to make the best of it, and have in a certain way come to love the old place. But I don't care about wheat nor yet about bullocks;—and a country house should always have a mistress." And so it was settled. Mr. Caldigate took for himself a house in Cambridge, whither he proposed to remove nothing but himself and his books, and promised to have Folking ready for his son and his son's bride on their return from their wedding tour. In all this Robert Bolton and the old squire acted together, the brother thinking that the position would suit his sister well. But others among the Boltons,—Mrs. Daniel, the London people, and even Mrs. Robert herself,—had thought that the "young people" had better be further away from the influences or annoyances of Puritan Grange. Robert, however, had declared that it would be absurd to yield to the temper, and prejudice, and fury—as he called it—of his father's wife. When this discussion was going on she had ab-

solutely quarrelled with the attorney, and the attorney had made up his mind that she should be—ignored. And then, too, as Robert explained, it must be for the husband and not for the wife to choose where they would live. Folking was, or at any rate would be, his own, by right of inheritance, and it was not to be thought of that a man should be driven away from his natural duties and from the enjoyment of his natural privileges by the mad humours of a fanatic female. In all this old Mr. Bolton was hardly consulted; but there was no reason why he should express an opinion. He was giving his daughter absolutely no fortune; nor had he even vouchsafed to declare what money should be coming to her at his death. John Caldigate had positively refused to say a word on the subject;—had refused even when instigated to do so by Hester's brother. "It shall be just as he pleases," Caldigate had said. "I told your father that I was not looking after his daughter with any view to money, and I will be as good as my word." Robert had told her father that something should be arranged;—but the old man had put it off from day to day, and nothing had been arranged. And so it came to pass that he was excluded almost from having an opinion as to his daughter's future life.

It was understood that the marriage trip should be continued for some months. Caldigate was fettered by no business that required an early return. He had worked hard for five years, and felt that he had earned a holiday. And Hester naturally was well disposed to be absent for as long a time as would suit her husband. Time, and time alone, might perhaps soften her mother's heart. They went to Italy, and stayed during the winter months in Rome, and then, when the fine weather came,

they returned across the Alps, and lingered about among the playgrounds of Europe, visiting Switzerland, the Tyrol, and the Pyrenees, and returning home to Cambridgeshire at the close of the following September.

And then there was a reason for the return. It would be well that the coming heir to the Folking estate should be born at Folking. Whether an heir, or only an insignificant girl, it would be well that the child should be born amidst the comforts of home; and so they came back. When they reached the station at Cambridge the squire was there to receive them, as were also Robert Bolton and his wife. "I am already in my new house," said the old man,—“but I mean to go out with you for to-day and to-morrow, and just stay till you are comfortably fixed.”

“I never see her myself,” said Robert, in answer to a whispered inquiry from his sister. “Or it would be more correct to say she will never see me. But I hear from the others that she speaks of you constantly.”

“She has written to me of course. But she never mentions John. In writing back I have always sent his love, and have endeavoured to show that I would not recognise any quarrel.”

“If I were you,” said Robert, “I would not take him with me when I went.” Then the three Caldigates were taken off to Folking.

A week passed by and then arrived the day on which it had been arranged that Hester was to go to Chester-ton and see her mother. There had been numerous letters, and at last the matter was settled between Caldigate and old Mr. Bolton at the bank. “I think you had better let her come alone,” the old man had said when Caldigate asked whether he might be al-

lowed to accompany his wife. "Mrs. Bolton has not been well since her daughter's marriage, and has felt the desolation of her position very much. She is weak and nervous, and I think you had better let Hester come alone." Had Caldigate known his mother-in-law better he would not have suggested a visit from himself. No one who did know her would have looked forward to see her old hatred eradicated by an absence of nine months. Hester therefore went into Cambridge alone, and was taken up to the house by her father. As she entered the iron gates she felt almost as though she were going into the presence of one who was an enemy to herself. And yet when she saw her mother, she rushed at once into the poor woman's arms. "Oh, mamma, dear mamma, dearest mamma! My own, own, own mamma!"

Mrs. Bolton was sitting by the open window of a small breakfast parlour which looked into the garden, and had before her on her little table her knitting and a volume of sermons. "So you have come back, Hester," she said after a short pause. She had risen at first to receive her daughter, and had returned her child's caresses, but had then reseated herself quickly, as though anxious not to evince any strong feeling on the occasion.

"Yes, mamma, I have come back. We have been so happy!"

"I am glad you have been happy. Such joys are short-lived; but, still——"

"He has been so good to me, mamma!"

Good! What was the meaning of the word good? She doubted the goodness of such goodness as his. Do not they who are tempted by the pleasures of the world always praise the good-nature and kindness of them by

whom they are tempted? There are meanings to the word good which are opposed one to another! "A husband is, I suppose, generally kind to his wife, at any rate for a little time," she said.

"Oh, mamma, I do so wish you knew him!" The woman turned her face round, away from her daughter, and assumed that look of hard, determined, impregnable obstinacy with which Hester had been well acquainted all her life. But the young wife had come there with a purpose, not strong, perhaps, in actual hope, but resolute even against hope to do her best. There must be an enduring misery to her unless she could bring her mother into some friendly relation with her husband, and she had calculated that the softness produced by her return would give a better chance for this than she might find at any more protracted time. But Mrs. Bolton had also made her calculations and had come to her determination. She turned her head away therefore, and sat quite silent, with the old stubborn look of resolved purpose.

"Mamma, you will let him come to you now?"

"No."

"Not your own Hester's husband?"

"No."

"Are we to be divided forever?"

"Did I not tell you before,—when you were going? Shall I lie, and say that I love him? I will not touch pitch, lest I be defiled."

"Mamma, he is my husband. You shall not call him pitch. He is my very own. Mamma, mamma!—recall the word that you have said."

The woman felt that it had to be recalled in some degree. "I said nothing of him, Hester. I call that pitch which I believe to be wrong, and if I swerve but

a hair's-breadth willingly towards what I believe to be evil, then I shall be touching pitch and then I shall be defiled. I did not say that he was pitch. Judge not and ye shall not be judged." But if ever judgment was pronounced, and a verdict given, and penalties awarded, such was done now in regard to John Caldigate.

"But, mamma, why will it be doing evil to be gracious to your daughter's husband?"

The woman had an answer to this appeal very clearly set forth in her mind though she was unable to produce it clearly in words. When the marriage had been first discussed she had opposed it with all her power, because she had believed the man to be wicked. He was unregenerate;—and when she had put it to her husband and to the Nicholases and to the Daniels to see whether such was not the case, they had not contradicted her. It was acknowledged that he was such a one as Robert,—a worldly man all round. And then he was worse than Robert, having been a spendthrift, a gambler, and, if the rumours which had reached them were true, given to the company of loose women. She had striven with all her might that such a one should not be allowed to take her daughter from her, and had striven in vain. He had succeeded;—but his character was not changed by his success. Did she not know him to be chaff that must be separated by the wind from the corn and then consumed in the fire? His character was not altered because that human being whom she loved the best in all the world had fallen into his power. He was not the less chaff,—the less likely to be burned. That her daughter should become chaff also,—ah, there was the agony of it! If instead of taking the husband and wife together, she could even now separate them,—would it not be her duty to do

so? Of all duties would it not be the first? Let the misery here be what it might, what was that to eternal misery or to eternal bliss? When therefore she was asked whether she would be doing evil were she to be gracious to her own son-in-law, she was quite—quite sure that any such civility would be a sin. The man was pitch,—though she had been coerced by the exigencies of a worldly courtesy to deny that she had intended to say so. He was pitch to her, and she declared to herself that were she to touch him she would be defiled. But she knew not in what language to explain all this. “What you call graciousness, Hester, is an obligation of which religion knows nothing,” she said after a pause.

“I don’t know why it shouldn’t. Are we to be divided, mamma, because of religion?”

“If you were alone——”

“But I am not alone. Oh, mamma, mamma, do you not know that I am going to become a mother.”

“My child!”

“And you will not be with me, because you think that you and John differ as to religious forms.”

“Forms!” she said. “Forms! Is the spirit there? By their fruits ye shall know them. I ask you yourself whether his life as you have seen it is such as I should think conformable with the Word of God?”

“Whose life is so?”

“But an effort may be made. Do not let us palter with each other, Hester! There are the sheep,—and there are the goats! Of which is he? According to the teaching of your early years, in which flock would he be found if account were taken now?”

There was something so terrible in this that the young wife who was thus called upon to denounce

her husband separated herself by some steps from her mother, retreating back to a chair in which she seated herself. "Do you remember, mamma, the words you said just now? Judge not and ye shall not be judged."

"Nor do I judge."

"And how does it go on? Forgive and ye shall be forgiven."

"Neither do I judge, nor can I forgive." This she said, putting all her emphasis on the pronoun, and thereby declaring her own humility. "But the great truths of my religion are dear to me. I will not trust myself in the way of sinners, because by some worldly alliance to which I myself was no consenting party, I have been brought into worldly contact with them. I at any rate will be firm. I say to you now no more than I said, ah, so many times, when it was still possible that my words should not be vain. They were vain. But not on that account am I to be changed. I will not be wound like a skein of silk round your little finger." That was it. Was she to give way in everything because they had been successful among them in carrying out this marriage in opposition to her judgment? Was she to assent that this man be treated as a sheep because he had prevailed against her, while she was so well aware that he would still have been a goat to them all had he not prevailed? She at any rate was sincere. She was consistent. She would be true to her principles even at the expense of all her natural yearnings. Of what use to her would be her religious convictions if she were to give them up just because her heart-strings were torn and agonised? The man was a goat though he were ten times told her child's husband. So she looked again away into the garden, and resolved that she would not yield in a single point.

"Good-bye, mamma," said Hester, rising from her chair, and coming up to her mother.

"Good-bye, Hester. God bless you, my child!"

"You will not come to me to Folking?"

"No. I will not go to Folking."

"I may come to you here?"

"Oh yes;—as often as you will, and for as long as you will."

"I cannot stay away from home without him, you know," said the young wife.

"As often as you will, and for as long as you will," the mother said again, repeating the words with emphasis. "Would I could have you here as I used to do, so as to look after every want and administer to every wish. My fingers shall work for your baby, and my prayers shall be said for him and for you, morning and night. I am not changed, Hester. I am still and ever shall be, while I am spared, your own loving mother." So they parted, and Hester was driven back to Folking.

In forming our opinion as to others we are daily brought into difficulty by doubting how much we should allow to their convictions, and how far we are justified in condemning those who do not accede to our own. Mrs. Bolton believed every word that she said. There was no touch of hypocrisy about her. Could she without sting of conscience have gone off to Folking and ate of her son-in-law's bread and drank of his cup, and sat in his presence, no mother living would have enjoyed more thoroughly the delight of waiting upon and caressing and bending over her child. She denied herself all this with an agony of spirit, groaning not only over their earthly separation, thinking not only of her daughter's present dangers, but tormented also by re-

flections as to dangers and possible separations in another world. But she knew she was right. She knew at least that were she to act otherwise there would be upon her conscience the weight of sin. She did not know that the convictions on which she rested with such confidence had come in truth from her injured pride,—had settled themselves in her mind because she had been beaten in her endeavours to prevent her daughter's marriage. She was not aware that she regarded John Caldigate as a goat,—as one who beyond all doubt was a goat,—simply because John Caldigate had had his way, while she had been debarred from hers. Such no doubt was the case. And yet who can deny her praise for fidelity to her own convictions? When we read of those who have massacred and tortured their opponents in religion, have boiled alive the unfortunates who have differed from themselves as to the meaning of an unintelligible word or two, have vigorously torn the entrails out of those who have been pious with a piety different from their own, how shall we dare to say that they should be punished for their fidelity? Mrs. Bolton spent much of that afternoon with her knees on the hard boards,—thinking that a hassock would have taken something from the sanctity of the action,—wrestling for her child in prayer. And she told herself that her prayer had been heard. She got up more than ever assured that she must not touch pitch lest she should be defiled. Let us pray for what we will with earnestness,—though it be for the destruction of half a world,—we are sure to think that our prayers have been heard.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE NEW HEIR

THINGS went on smoothly at Folking, or with apparent smoothness for three months, during which John Caldigate surprised both his friends and his enemies by the exemplary manner in which he fulfilled his duties as a parish squire. He was put on the commission, and was in the way to become the most active Justice of the Peace in those parts. He made himself intimate with all the tenants, and was almost worshipped by Mr. Ralph Holt, his nearest neighbour, to whose judgment he submitted himself in all agricultural matters. He shot a little, but moderately, having no inclination to foster what is called a head of game. And he went to church very regularly, having renewed his intimacy with Mr. Bromley, the parson, a gentleman who had unfortunately found it necessary to quarrel with the old squire, because the old squire had been so manifestly a pagan.

There had been unhappiness in the parish on this head, and, especially, unhappiness to Mr. Bromley, who was a good man. That Mr. Caldigate should be what he called a pagan had been represented by Mr. Bromley to his friends as a great misfortune, and especially a misfortune to the squire himself. But he would have ignored that in regard to social life,—so Mr. Bromley said when discussing the matter,—if the pagan would have desisted from arguing the subject. But when Mr.

Caldigate insisted on the parson owning the unreasonableness of his own belief, and called upon him to confess himself to be either a fool or a hypocrite, then the parson found himself constrained to drop all further intercourse. "It is the way with all priests," said the old squire triumphantly to the first man he could get to hear him. "The moment you disagree with them they become your enemies at once, and would straight-way kill you if they had the power." He probably did not know how very disagreeable he had made himself to the poor clergyman.

But now matters were on a much better footing, and all the parish rejoiced. The new squire was seen in his pew every Sunday morning, and often entertained the parson at the house. The rumour of this change was indeed so great that more than the truth reached the ears of some of the Boltons, and advantage was taken of it by those who desired to prove to Mrs. Bolton that the man was not a goat. What more would she have? He went regularly to morning and evening service,—here it was that rumour exaggerated our hero's virtues,—did all his duty as a country gentleman, and was kind to his wife. The Daniels, who were but lukewarm people, thought that Mrs. Bolton was bound to give way. Mrs. Robert declared among her friends that the poor woman was becoming mad from religion, and the old banker himself was driven very hard for a reply when Robert asked him whether such a son-in-law as John Caldigate ought to be kept at arm's length. The old man did in truth hate the name of John Caldigate, and regretted bitterly the indiscretion of that day when the spendthrift had been admitted within his gates. Though he had agreed to the marriage, partly from a sense of duty to his child, partly

under the influences of his son, he had, since that, been subject to his wife for nine or ten months. She had not been able to prevail against him in action; but no earthly power could stop her tongue. Now when these new praises were dinned into his ears, when he did convince himself that, as far as worldly matters went, his son-in-law was likely to become a prosperous and respected gentleman, he would fain have let the question of hostility drop. There need not have been much intercourse between Puritan Grange and Folking; but then also there need be no quarrel. He was desirous that Caldigate should be allowed to come to the house, and that even visits of ceremony should be made to Folking. But Mrs. Bolton would have nothing to do with such half friendship. In the time that was coming she must be everything or nothing to her daughter. And she could not be brought to think that one who had been so manifestly a goat should cease to be a goat so suddenly. In other words, she could not soften her heart towards the man who had conquered her. Therefore when the time came for the baby to be born there had been no reconciliation between Puritan Grange and Folking.

Mrs. Babington had been somewhat less stern. Immediately on the return of the married couple to their own home she had still been full of wrath, and had predicted every kind of evil; but when she heard that all tongues were saying all good things of this nephew of hers, and when she was reminded by her husband that blood is thicker than water, and when she reflected that it is the duty of Christians to forgive injuries, she wrote to the sinner as follows:

“BABINGTON HALL, *November 187—*.

“MY DEAR JOHN,—We are all here desirous that by-gones should be by-gones, and are willing to forgive—though we may not perhaps be able to forget. I am quite of opinion that resentments should not be lasting, let them have been ever so well justified by circumstances at first.

“Your uncle bids me say that he hopes you will come over and shoot the Puddinghall coverts with Humphrey and John. They propose Thursday next, but would alter the day if that does not suit.

“We have heard of your wife’s condition, of course, and trust that everything may go well with her. I shall hope to make her acquaintance some day when she is able to receive visitors.

“I am particularly induced at the present moment to hold out to you once more the right hand of fellowship and family affection by the fact that dear Julia is about to settle herself most advantageously in life. She is engaged to marry the Rev. Augustus Smirkie, the rector of Plum-cum-Pippins near Woodbridge in this county. We all like Mr. Smirkie very much indeed, and think *that Julia has been most fortunate in her choice.*” These words were underscored doubly by way of showing how very much superior was Mr. Augustus Smirkie to Mr. John Caldigate. “I may perhaps as well mention to avoid anything disagreeable at present, that Julia is at this time staying with Mr. Smirkie’s mother at Ipswich.—Your affectionate aunt,
“MARYANNE BABINGTON.”

Caldigate was at first inclined to send, in answer to this letter, a reply which would not have been agreeable to his aunt, but was talked into a better state of

mind by his wife. "Telling me that she will forgive me! The question is whether I will forgive her!" "Let that be the question," said his wife, "and do forgive her. She wants to come round, and, of course, she has to make the best of it for herself. Tell her from me that I shall be delighted to see her whenever she chooses to come."

"Poor Julia!" said Caldigate, laughing.

"Of course you think so, John. That's natural enough. Perhaps I think so too. But what has that to do with it?"

"It's rather unfortunate that I know so much about Mr. Smirkie. He is fifty years old, and has five children by his former wife."

"I don't see why he shouldn't be a good husband for all that."

"And Plum-cum-Pippins is less than £300 a year. Poor dear Julia!"

"I believe you are jealous, John."

"Well; yes. Look at the way she has underscored it. Of course I'm jealous." Nevertheless he wrote a courteous answer promising to go over and shoot the coverts, and stay for one night.

He did go over and shoot the coverts, and stayed for one night; but the visit was not very successful. Aunt Polly would talk of the glories of the Plum-cum-Pippins rectory in a manner which implied that dear Julia's escape from a fate which once threatened her had been quite providential. When he alluded,—as he did—but should not have done,—to the young Smirkies, she spoke with almost ecstatic enthusiasm of the "dear children," Caldigate knowing the while that the eldest child must be at least sixteen. And then, though Aunt Polly was kind to him, she was kind in an almost in-

sulting manner,—as though he were to be received for the sake of auld lang syne in spite of the step he had taken downwards in the world. He did his best to bear all this with no more than an inward smile, telling himself that it behoved him as a man to allow her to have her little revenge. But the smile was seen, and the more that was seen of it, the more often was he reminded that he had lost that place in the Babington elysium which might have been his, had he not been too foolish to know what was good for him. And a hint was given that the Boltons a short time since had not been aristocratic, whereas it was proved to him from Burke's Landed Gentry that the Smirkies had been established in Suffolk ever since Cromwell's time. No doubt their land had gone, but still there had been Smirkies.

"How did you get on with them?" his father asked as he passed home through Cambridge.

"Much the same as usual. Of course in such a family a son-in-law elect is more thought of than a useless married man."

"They snubbed you."

"Aunt Polly snubbed me a little, and I don't think I had quite so good a place for the shooting as in the old days. But all that was to be expected. I quite agree with Aunt Polly that family quarrels are foolish things."

"I am not so sure. Some people doom themselves to an infinity of annoyance because they won't avoid the society of disagreeable people. I don't know that I have ever quarrelled with anyone. I have never intended to do so. But when I find that a man or woman is not sympathetic I think it better to keep out of the way." That was the squire's account of him-

self. Those who knew him in the neighbourhood were accustomed to say that he had quarrelled with everybody about him.

In December the baby was born, just twelve months after the marriage, and there were great demonstrations of joy, and ringing of bells in the parishes of Utterden and Netherden. The baby was a boy, and all was as it ought to be. John Caldigate himself when he came to look at his position and to understand the feeling of those around him, was astonished to find how strong was the feeling in his own favour, and how thoroughly the tenants had been outraged by the idea that the property might be made over to a more distant member of the family. What was it to them who lived in the house at Folking? Why should they have been solicitous in the matter? They had their leases, and there was no adequate reason for supposing that one Caldigate would be more pleasant in his dealing with them than another. And yet it was evident to him now that this birth of a real heir at the squire's house with a fair prospect that the acres would descend in a right line was regarded by them all with almost superstitious satisfaction. The bells were rung as though the church-towers were going to be pulled down, and there was not a farmer or a farmer's wife who did not come to the door of Folking to ask how the young mother and the baby were doing.

"This is as it should be, squire," said Ralph Holt, who was going about in his Sunday clothes, as though it was a day much too sacred for muck and work. He had caught hold of Caldigate in the stable yard, and was now walking with him down towards the ferry.

"Yes;—she's doing very well, they tell me," said the newly-made father.

"In course she'll do well. Why not? A healthy lass like she, if I may make so free? There ain't nothing like having them strong and young, with no town-bred airs about 'em. I never doubted as she wouldn't do well. I can tell from their very walk what sort of mothers they'll be." Mr. Holt had long been known as the most judicious breeder of stock in that neighbourhood. "But it ain't only that, squire."

"The young 'un will do well too, I hope."

"In course he will. Why not? The foals take after their dams for a time, pretty much always. But what I mean is;—we be all glad you've come back from them out-o'-the-way parts."

"I had to go there, Holt."

"Well;—we don't know much about that, sir, and I don't mean nothing about that."

"To tell the truth, my friend, I should not have done very well here unless I had been able to top-dress the English acres with a little Australian gold."

"Like enough, squire; like enough. But I wasn't making bold to say nothing about that. For a young gentleman to go out a while and then to come back was all very well. Most of 'em does it. But when there was a talk as you wern't to come back, and that Master George was to take the place;—why then it did seem as things was very wrong."

"Master George might have been quite as good as I."

"It wasn't the proper thing, squire. It wasn't straight. If you hadn't never 'a' been, sir, or if the Lord Almighty had taken you as he did the others, God bless 'em, nobody wouldn't have had a right to say nothing. But as you was to the fore it wouldn't have been straight, and no one wouldn't have thought it straight." Instigated by this John Caldigate looked a good deal

into the matter that day, and began to feel that, having been born Squire of Folking, he had, perhaps, no right to deal with himself otherwise. Then various thoughts passed through his mind as to other dealings which had taken place. How great had been the chance against his being Squire of Folking when he started with Dick Shand to look for Australian gold! And how little had been the chance of his calling Hester Bolton his wife when he was pledging his word to Mrs. Smith on board the Goldfinder! But now it had all come round to him just as he would have had it. There was his wife upstairs in the big bedroom with her baby,—the wife as to whom he had made that romantic resolution when he had hardly spoken to her; and there had been the bells ringing and the tenants congratulating him, and everything had been pleasant. His father who had so scorned him,—who in the days of Davis and Newmarket had been so well justified in scorning him,—was now his closest friend. Thinking of all this, he told himself that he had certainly received better things than he had deserved.

A day or two after the birth of the baby Mrs. Robert came out to see the new prodigy, and on the following day Mrs. Daniel. Mrs. Robert was, of course, very friendly and disposed to be in all respects a good sister-in-law. Hester's great grief was in regard to her mother. She was steadfast enough in her resolution to stand in all respects by her husband, if there must be a separation,—but the idea of the separation robbed her of much of her happiness. Mrs. Robert was aware that a great effort was being made with Mrs. Bolton. The young squire's respectability was so great, and his conduct so good, that not only the Boltons themselves, but neighbours around who knew aught of the Bolton

affairs, were loud in denouncing the woman for turning up her nose at such a son-in-law. The great object was to induce her to say that she would allow Caldigate to enter the house at Chesterton. "You know I never see her now," said Mrs. Robert; "I'm too much of a sinner to think of entering the gates."

"Do not laugh at her, Margaret," said Hester.

"I do not mean to laugh at her. It is simply the truth. Robert and I have made up our minds that it is better for us all that I should not put myself in her way."

"Think how different it must be for me!"

"Of course it is. It is dreadful to think that she should be so—prejudiced. But what can I do, dear? If they will go on persevering, she will, of course, have to give way." The "they" spoken of were the Daniels, and old Mr. Bolton himself, and latterly the Nicholases, all of whom were of opinion that the separation of the mother from her daughter was very dreadful, especially when it came to be understood that the squire of Folking went regularly to his parish church.

On the next day Mrs. Daniel came out; and though she was much less liked by Hester than her younger sister-in-law, she brought more comfortable tidings. She had been at the Grange a day or two before, and Mrs. Bolton had almost consented to say that she would see John Caldigate. "You shouldn't be in a hurry, you know, my dear," said Mrs. Daniel.

"But what has John done that there should be any question about all this?"

"I suppose he was a little—just a little—what they call fast once."

"He got into debt when he was a boy," said the wife, "and then paid off everything and a great deal

more by his own industry. It seems to me that everybody ought to be proud of him."

"I don't think your mother is proud of him, my dear."

"Poor mamma!"

"I hope he'll go when he's told to do so."

"John! Of course he'll go if I ask him. There's nothing he wouldn't do to make me happy. But really when I talk to him about it at all, I am ashamed of myself. Poor mamma!" The result of this visit was, however, very comforting. Mrs. Daniel had seen Mrs. Bolton, and had herself been witness to the fact that Mrs. Bolton had mitigated the sternness of her denial when asked to receive her son-in-law at Puritan Grange. It was, said Mrs. Daniel, the settled opinion of the Bolton family generally that, in the course of another month or so, the woman would be induced to give way under the pressure put upon her by the family generally.

CHAPTER XXIV

NEWS FROM THE GOLD MINES

It was said at the beginning of the last chapter that things had gone on smoothly, or with apparent smoothness, at Folking since the return of the Caldigates from their wedding tour; but there had in truth been a small cloud in the Folking heavens over and beyond that Babington haze which was now vanishing, and the storm at Chesterton as to which hopes were entertained that it would clear itself away. It will perhaps be remembered that Caldigate's offer for the sale of his interest in the Polyeuka mine had been suddenly accepted by certain enterprising persons in Australia, and that the money itself had been absolutely forthcoming. This had been in every way fortunate, as he had been saved from the trouble of another journey in the colony; and his money matters had been put on such a footing as to make him altogether comfortable. But just when he heard that the money had been lodged to his account,—and when the money actually had been so paid, he received a telegram from Mr. Crinkett, begging that the matter might be for a time postponed. This, of course, was out of the question. His terms had been accepted,—which might have gone for very little had not the money been forthcoming. But the cash was positively in his hands. Who ever heard of a man "postponing" an arrangement in such circumstances? Let them do what they might with Polyeuka, he was

safe! He telegraphed back to say that there could be no postponement. As far as he was concerned the whole thing was settled. Then there came a multiplicity of telegrams, very costly to the Crinkett interest;—costly also and troublesome to himself; for he, though the matter was so pleasantly settled as far as he was concerned, could not altogether ignore the complaints that were made to him. Then there came very long letters, long and loud; letters not only from Crinkett, but from others telling him that the Polyeuca gold had come to an end, the lode disappearing altogether, as lodes sometimes do disappear. The fact was that the Crinkett Company asked to have back half its money, offering him the Polyeuca mine in its entirety if he chose to accept it.

John Caldigate, though in England he could be and was a liberal gentleman, had been long enough in Australia to know that if he meant to hold his own among such men as Mr. Crinkett, he must make the best of such turns of fortune as chance might give him. Under no circumstances would Crinkett have been generous to him. Had Polyeuca suddenly become more prolific in the precious metal than any mine in the colony the Crinkett Company would have laughed at any claim made by him for further payment. When a bargain has been fairly made, the parties must make the best of it. He was therefore very decided in his refusal to make restitution, though he was at the same time profuse in his expressions of sorrow.

Then there came a threat,—not from Crinkett, but from Mrs. Euphemia Smith. And the letter was not signed Euphemia Smith,—but Euphemia Caldigate. And the letter was as follows:

“In spite of all your treachery to me I do not wish to ruin you, or to destroy your young wife, by proving myself in England to have been married to you at Ahalala. But I will do so unless you assent to the terms which Crinkett has proposed. He and I are in partnership in the matter with two or three others, and are willing to let all that has gone before be forgotten if we have means given us to make another start. You cannot feel that the money you have received is fairly yours, and I can hardly think you would wish to become rich by taking from me all that I have earned after so many hardships. If you will do as I propose, you had better send out an agent. On paying us the money he shall not only have the marriage-certificate, but shall stand by and see me married to Crinkett, who is now a widower. After that, of course, I can make no claim to you. If you will not do this, both I and Crinkett, and the other man who was present at our marriage, and Anne Young, who has been with me ever since, will go at once to England, and the law must take its course.

“I have no scruple in demanding this as you owe me so much more.

“Allan, the Wesleyan who married us, has gone out of the colony, no one knows where,—but I send you the copy of the certificate; and all the four of us who were there are still together. And there were others who were at Ahalala at the time, and who remember the marriage well. Dick Shand was not in the chapel, but Dick knew all about it. There is quite plenty of evidence.

“Send back by the wire word what you will do, and let your agent come over as soon as possible.

“EUPHEMIA CALDIGATE.”

However true or however false the allegations made in the above letter may have been, for a time it stunned him greatly. This letter reached him about a month before the birth of his son, and for a day or two it disturbed him greatly. He did not show it to his wife, but wandered about the place alone thinking whether he would take any notice of it, and what notice. At last he resolved that he would take the letter to his brother-in-law Robert, and ask the attorney's advice. "How much of it is true?" demanded Robert, when he read the letter twice from beginning to end.

"A good deal," said Caldigate,—“as much as may be, with the exception that I was never married to the woman.”

"I suppose not that." Robert Bolton as he spoke was very grave, but did not at first seem disposed to be angry. "Had you not better tell me everything, do you think?"

"It is for that purpose that I have come and brought you the letter. You understand about the money."

"I suppose so."

"There can be no reason why I should return a penny of it?"

"Certainly not now. You certainly must not return it under a threat,—even though the woman should be starving. There can be no circumstances——" and as he spoke he dashed his hand down upon the table,—“no circumstances in which a man should allow money to be extorted from him by a threat. For Hester's sake you must not do that.”

"No;—no; I must not do that, of course."

"And now tell me what is true?" There was something of authority in the tone of his voice, something perhaps of censure, something too of doubt, which

went much against the grain with Caldigate. He had determined to tell his story, feeling that counsel was necessary to him, but he wished so to tell it as to subject himself to no criticism and to admit no fault. He wanted assistance, but he wanted it on friendly and sympathetic terms. He had a great dislike to being—"blown up," as he would probably have expressed it himself, and he already thought that he saw in his companion's eye a tendency that way. Turning all this in his mind, he paused a moment before he began to tell his tale. "You say that a good deal in this woman's letter is true. Had you not better tell me what is true?"

"I was very intimate with her."

"Did she ever live with you?"

"Yes, she did."

"As your wife?"

"Well; yes. It is of course best that you should know all." Then he gave a tolerably true account of all that had happened between himself and Mrs. Smith up to the time at which, as the reader knows, he found her performing at the Sydney theatre.

"You had made her a distinct promise of marriage on board the ship?"

"I think I had."

"You think?"

"Yes. I think I did. Can you not understand that a man may be in great doubt as to the exact words that he may have spoken at such a time?"

"Hardly."

"Then I don't think you realise the man's position. I wish to let you know the truth as exactly as I can. You had better take it for granted that I did make such a promise, though probably no such promise was

absolutely uttered. But I did tell her afterwards that I would marry her."

"Afterwards?"

"Yes, when she followed me up to Ahalala."

"Did Richard Shand know her?"

"Of course he did,—on board the ship;—and he was with me when she came to Ahalala."

"And she lived with you?"

"Yes."

"And you promised to marry her?"

"Yes."

"And that was all?"

"I did not marry her of course," said Caldigate.

"Who heard the promise?"

"It was declared by her in the presence of that Wesleyan minister she speaks of. He went to her to rebuke her, and she told him of the promise. Then he asked me, and I did not deny it. At the moment when he taxed me with it I was almost minded to do as I had promised."

"You repeated your promise then to him?"

"Nothing of the kind. I did not deny it, and I told him at last to mind his own business. Life up there was a little rough at that time."

"So it seems, indeed. And then after that?"

"I had given her money and she had some claims in a gold mine. When she was successful for a time she became so keen about her money that I fancy she hardly wished to get herself married. Then we had some words, and so we parted."

"Did she call herself—Mrs. Caldigate?"

"I never called her so."

"Did she herself assume the name?"

"It was a wild kind of life up there, Robert, and

this was apparent in nothing more than in the names people used. I daresay some of the people did call her Mrs. Caldigate. But they knew she was not my wife."

"And this man Crinkett?"

"He knew all about it."

"He had a wife. Did his wife know her?"

"He had quarrelled with his wife at that time and had sent her away from Nobble. Mrs. Smith was then living at Nobble, and Crinkett knew more about her than I did. She was mad after gold, and it was with Crinkett she was working. I gave her a lot of shares in another mine to leave me."

"What mine?"

"The Old-Stick-in-the-Mud they called it. I had been in partnership with Crinkett and wanted to get out of the thing, and go in altogether for Polyeuca. At that time the woman cared little for husbands or lovers. She had been bitten with the fury of gold-gambling and, like so many of them, filled her mind with an idea of unlimited wealth. And she had a turn of luck. I suppose she was worth at one time eight or ten thousand pounds."

"But she did not keep it?"

"I knew but little of her afterwards. I kept out of her way; and though I had dealings with Crinkett, I dropped them as soon as I could." Then he paused;—but Robert Bolton held his peace with anything but a satisfied countenance. "Now I think you know all about it."

"It is a most distressing story."

"All attempts at robbery and imposition are of course distressing."

"There is so much in it that is—disgraceful."

"I deny it altogether,—if you mean disgraceful to me."

"If it had all been known as it is known now,—as it is known even by your own telling, do you think that I should have consented to your marriage with my sister?"

"Why not?" Robert Bolton shrugged his shoulders. "And I think, moreover, that had you refused your consent I should have married your sister just the same."

"Then you know very little about the matter."

"I don't think there can be any good in going into that. It is at any rate the fact that your sister is my wife. As this demand has been made upon me it was natural that I should wish to discuss it with someone whom I can trust. I tell you all the facts, but I am not going to listen to any fault-finding as to my past life."

"Poor Hester!"

"Why is she poor? She does not think herself so."

"Because there is a world of sorrow and trouble before her; and because all that you have told to me must probably be made known to her."

"She knows it already;—that is she knows what you mean. I have not told her of the woman's lie, nor of this demand for money. But I shall when she is strong enough to hear it and to talk of it. You are very much mistaken if you think that there are secrets between me and Hester."

"I don't suppose you will be pleased to hear the story of such a life told in all the public papers."

"Certainly not;—but it will be an annoyance which I can bear. You or anyone else would be very much mistaken who would suppose that life out in those places can go on in the same regular way that it does

here. Gold beneath the ground is a dangerous thing to touch, and few who have had to do with it have come out much freer from misfortune than myself. As for these people, I don't suppose that I shall hear from them again. I shall send them both word that not a shilling is to be expected from me."

There was after this a long discussion as to the nature of the messages to be sent. There was no absolute quarrel between the two men, and the attorney acknowledged to himself that it was now his duty to give the best advice in his power to his brother-in-law; but their manner to each other was changed. It was evident that Robert did not quite believe all that Caldigate told him, and evident also that Caldigate resented this want of confidence. But still each knew that he could not do without the other. Their connection was too firm and too close to be shaken off. And, therefore, though their tones were hardly friendly, still they consulted as to what should be done. It was at last decided that two messages should be sent by Caldigate, one to Crinkett and the other to Mrs. Smith, and each in the same words. "No money will be sent you on behalf of the Polyeuka mine," and that this should be all. Any letter, Robert Bolton thought, would be inexpedient. Then they parted, and the two messages were at once sent.

After a day or two Caldigate recovered his spirits. We all probably know how some trouble will come upon us and for a period seem to quell all that is joyous in our life, and that then by quick degrees the weight of the trouble will grow less, till the natural spring and vivacity of the mind will recover itself, and make little or nothing of that which a few hours ago was felt to be so grievous a burden. So it had been with John

Caldigate. He had been man enough to hold up his head when telling his story to Robert Bolton, and to declare that the annoyance would be one that he could bear easily;—but still for some hours after that he had been unhappy. If by sacrificing some considerable sum of money,—even a large sum of money, say ten thousand pounds,—he could at that moment have insured the silence of Crinkett and the woman, he would have paid his money. He knew the world well enough to be aware that he could insure nothing by any such sacrifice. He must defy these claimants;—and then if they chose to come to England with their story, he must bear it as best he could. Those who saw him did not know that aught ailed him, and Robert Bolton spoke no word of the matter to anyone at Cambridge.

But Robert Bolton thought very much of it,—so much that on the following day he ran up to London on purpose to discuss the matter with his brother William. How would it be with them, and what would be his duty, if the statement made by the woman should turn out to be true? What security had they after the story told by Caldigate himself that there had been no marriage? By his own showing he had lived with the woman, had promised to marry her, had acknowledged his promise in the hearing of a clergyman, and had been aware that she had called herself by his name. Then he had given her money to go away. This had been his own story. “Do you believe him?” he said to his brother William.

“Yes; I do. In the first place, though I can understand from his antecedents and from his surroundings at the time, that he should have lived a loose sort of life when he was out there, I don’t think that he is a rascal or even a liar.”

"One wouldn't wish to think so."

"I do not think so. He doesn't look like it, or talk like it, or act like it."

"How many cases do we know in which some abominable unexpected villainy has destroyed the happiness and respectability of a family?"

"But what would you do?" asked the barrister. "She is married to him. You cannot separate them if you would."

"No,—poor girl. If it be so, her misery is accomplished; but if it be so she should at once be taken away from him. What a triumph it would be to her mother!"

"That is a dreadful thing to say, Robert."

"But nevertheless true. Think of her warnings and refusals, and of my persistence! But if it be so, not the less must we all insist upon—destroying him. If it be so, he must be punished to the extent of the law."

William Bolton, however, would not admit that it could be so, and Robert declared that though he suspected,—though in such a case he found himself bound to suspect,—he did not in truth believe that Caldigate had been guilty of so terrible a crime. All probability was against it;—but still it was possible. Then, after much deliberation, it was decided that an agent should be sent out by them to New South Wales, to learn the truth, as far as it could be learned, and to bring back whatever evidence might be collected without making too much noise in the collection of it. Then there arose the question whether Caldigate should be told of this;—but it was decided that it should be done at the joint expense of the two brothers without the knowledge of Hester's husband.

CHAPTER XXV

THE BABY'S SPONSORS

"Is there anything wrong between you and Robert?" Hester asked this question of her husband, one morning in January, as he was sitting by the side of her sofa in their bedroom. The baby was in her arms, and at that moment there was a question as to the godfathers and godmother for the baby.

The letter from Mrs. Smith had arrived on the last day of October, nearly two months before the birth of the baby, and the telegrams refusing to send the money demanded had been despatched on the 1st of November,—so that, at this time, Caldigate's mind was accustomed to the burden of the idea. From that day to this he had not often spoken of the matter to Robert Bolton,—nor indeed had there been much conversation between them on other matters. Robert had asked him two or three times whether he had received any reply by the wires. No such message had come; and of course he answered his brother-in-law's questions accordingly;—but he had answered them almost with a look of offence. The attorney's manner and tone seemed to him to convey reproach; and he was determined that none of the Boltons should have the liberty to find fault with him. It had been suggested, some weeks since, before the baby was born, that an effort should be made to induce Mrs. Bolton to act as godmother. And, since that, among the names of many other relatives and friends, those of

Uncle Babington and Robert Bolton had been proposed. Hester had been particularly anxious that her brother should be asked, because,—as she so often said to her husband,—he had always been her firm friend in the matter of her marriage. But now, when the question was to be settled, John Caldigate shook his head.

“I was afraid there was something even before baby was born,” said the wife.

“There is something, my pet.”

“What is it, John? You do not mean to keep it secret from me?”

“I have not the slightest objection to your asking him to stand;—but I think it possible that he may refuse.”

“Why should he refuse?”

“Because, as you say, there is something wrong between us. There have been applications for money about the Polyeuka mine. I would not trouble you about it while you were ill.”

“Does he think you ought to give back the money?”

“No,—not that. We are quite agreed about the money. But another question has come up;—and though we are, I believe, agreed about that too, still there has been something a little uncomfortable.”

“Would not baby make that all right?”

“I think if you were to ask your brother William it would be better.”

“May I not know what it is now, John?”

“I have meant you to know always,—from the moment when it occurred,—when you should be well enough.”

“I am well now.”

“I hardly know; and yet I cannot bear to keep it secret from you.”

There was something in his manner which made her feel at once that the subject to which he alluded was of the greatest importance. Whether weak or strong, of course she must be told now. Let the shock of the tidings be what it might, the doubt would be worse. She felt all that, and she knew that he would feel it. "I am quite strong," she said; "you must tell me now."

"Is baby asleep? Put him in the cradle."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"I do not say that it is bad at all. There is nothing bad in it,—except a lie. Let me put him in the cradle."

Then he took the child very gently and deposited him, fast asleep, among the blankets. He had already assumed for himself the character of being a good male nurse; and she was always delighted when she saw the baby in his arms. Then he came and seated himself close to her on the sofa, and put his arm round her waist. "There is nothing bad—but a lie."

"A lie may be so very bad!"

"Yes, indeed; and this lie is very bad. Do you remember my telling you—about a woman?"

"That Mrs. Smith;—the dancing woman?"

"Yes;—her."

"Of course I remember."

"She was one of those, it seems, who bought the Polyeuca mine."

"Oh, indeed!"

"She, with Crinkett and others. Now they want their money back again."

"But can they make you send it? And would it be very bad—to lose it?"

"They cannot make me send it. They have no claim to a single shilling. And if they could make me pay it, that would not be very bad."

"What is it, then? You are afraid to tell me?"

"Yes, my darling,—afraid to speak to you of what is so wicked;—afraid to shock you, to disgust you; but not afraid of any injury that can be done to you. No harm will come to you."

"But to you?"

"Nor to me;—none to you, or to me, or to baby there." As he said this she clutched his hand with hers. "No harm, dearest; and yet the thing is so abominable that I can hardly bring myself to wound your ears with it."

"You must tell me now, John."

"Yes, I must tell you. I have thought about it much, and I know that it is better that you should be told." He had thought much about it, and had so resolved. But he had not quite known how difficult the telling would be. And now he was aware that he was adding to the horror she would feel by pausing and making much of the thing. And yet he could not tell it as though it were a light matter. If he could have declared it all at once,—at first, with a smile on his face, then expressing his disgust at the woman's falsehood,—it would have been better. "That woman has written me a letter in which she declares herself to be—my wife!"

"Your wife! John! Your wife?" These exclamations came from her almost with a shriek as she jumped up from his arms and for a moment stood before him.

"Come back to me," he said. Then again she seated herself. "You did not leave me then because you doubted me?"

"Oh no," she cried, throwing herself upon him and smothering him with kisses—"No, no! It was sur-

prise at such horrid words,—not doubt, not doubt of you. I will never doubt you.”

“It was because I was sure of you that I have ventured to tell you this.”

“You may be sure of me,” she said, sobbing violently the while. “You are sure of me; are you not? And now tell it me all. How did she say so? why did she say so? Is she coming to claim you? Tell me all. Oh, John, tell me everything.”

“The why is soon told. Because she wants money. She had heard no doubt of my marriage and thought to frighten me out of money. I do not think she would do it herself. The man Crinkett has put her up to it.”

“What does she say?”

“Just that,—and then she signs herself,—Euphemia Caldigate.”

“Oh, John!”

“Now you know it all.”

“May I not see the letter?”

“For what good? But you shall see it if you wish it. I have determined that nothing shall be kept back from you. In all that there may ever be to trouble us the best comfort will be in perfect confidence.” He had already learned enough of her nature to be sure that in this way would he best comfort her, and most certainly ensure her trust in himself.

“Oh yes,” she cried. “If you will tell me all, I will never doubt you.” Then she took the letter from his hand, and attempted to read it. But her excitement was so great that though the words were written very clearly, she could not bring her mind to understand them. “Treachery! Ruin! Married to you! What is it all? Do you read it to me;—every word of it.” ~~Then~~ she did read it; every word of it. “She says that

she will marry the other man. How can she marry him when she says that she is—your wife?"

"Just so, my pet. But you see what she says. It does not matter much to her whether it be true or false, so that she can get my money from me. But, Hester, I would fain be just even to her. No doubt she wrote the letter."

"Who else would have written it?"

"She wrote it. I know her hand. And these are her words,—because they are properly expressed. But it is all his doing,—the man's doing. He has got her in his power, and he is using her in this way."

"If you sent her money——?"

"Not a shilling;—not though she were starving; not now. A man who gives money under a threat is gone. If I were to send her money, everyone would believe this tale that she tells. Your brother Robert would believe it."

"He knows it?"

"I took the letter to him instantly, but I made up my mind that I would not show it you till baby was born. You can understand that?" She only pressed closer to him as he said this. "I showed it to Robert, and, altogether we are not quite such friends as we were before."

"You do not mean that he believes it?"

"No; not that. He does not believe it. If he did, I do not see how he and I could ever speak to each other again. I don't think he believes it at all. But I had to tell him the whole story, and that, perhaps, offended him." The "whole story" had not been told to Hester, nor did he think it necessary that it should be told. There was no reason why these details which Robert had elicited by his questions should be repeated

to her,—the promise of marriage, the interference of the Wesleyan minister, the use made of his name,—of all this he said nothing. But she had now been told that which to her had been very dreadful, and she was not surprised that her brother should have been offended when he heard the same sad story. She, of course, had at once pardoned the old offence. A young wife, when she is sure of her husband, will readily forgive all offences committed before marriage, and will almost be thankful for the confidence placed in her when offences are confessed. But she could understand that a brother could not be thankful, and she would naturally exaggerate in her own mind the horror which he would feel at such a revelation. Then the husband endeavoured to lighten the effect of what he had said. “Offence, perhaps, is the wrong word. But he was stiff and masterful, if you know what I mean.”

“You would not bear that, certainly, John?”

“No. I have to own that I do not love the assumption of authority,—except from you.”

“You do not like it from anybody, John.”

“You would not wish me to submit myself to your brother?”

“No; but I think I might ask him to be baby’s god-father.”

“As you please; only you would be unhappy if he refused.”

Then there came a little wail from the cradle and the baby was taken up, and for some minutes his little necessities occupied the mother to the exclusion even of that terrible letter. But when Caldigate was about to leave the room, she asked him another question. “Will she do anything more, John?”

“I can hardly say. I should think not.”

"What does Robert think?"

"He has not told me. I sent an immediate refusal by the telegraph wires, and have heard nothing since."

"Is he—nervous about it?"

"I hardly know. It dwells in his mind, no doubt."

"Are you nervous?"

"It dwells in my mind. That is all."

"May I speak to him about it?"

"Why should you? What good would it do? I would rather you did not. Nevertheless, if you feel frightened, if you think that there is anything wrong, it will be natural that you should go to him for assistance. I will not forbid it." As he said this he stood back away from her. It was but by a foot or two, but still there was a sign of separation which instantly made itself palpable to her.

"Wrong, how wrong?" she said, following him and clinging to him. "You do not suppose that I would go to him because I think you wrong? Do you not know that whatever might come I should cling to you? What is he to me compared to you? No; I will never speak to him about it."

He returned her caress with fervour, and stroked her hair, and kissed her forehead. "My dearest! my own! my darling! But what I mean is that if some other man's opinion on this subject is necessary to your comfort, you may go to him."

"No other man's opinion shall be necessary to me about anything. I will not speak about it to Robert, or to anyone. But if more should come of it, you will tell me?"

"You shall know everything that comes. I have never for a moment had the idea of keeping it back from you. But because of baby, and because baby had

to be born, I delayed it." This was an excuse which, as the mother of her child, she could not but accept with thankfulness.

"I think I will ask him," she said that night, referring again to the vexed question of godfathers. Uncle Babington had some weeks since very generously offered his services, and, of course, they had been generously accepted. Among the baby's relations he was the man of highest standing in the world; and then this was a mark of absolute forgiveness in reference to the wrongs of poor Julia. And a long letter had been prepared to Mrs. Bolton, written by Hester's own hand, not without much trouble, in which the baby's grandmother was urged to take upon herself the duties of godmother. All this had been discussed in the family, so that the nature of the petition was well known to Mrs. Bolton for some time before she received it. Mrs. Daniel, who had consented to act in the event of a refusal from Puritan Grange, had more than once used her influence with her stepmother-in-law. But no hint had as yet come to Folking as to what the answer might be. It had also been suggested that Robert should be the other godfather,—the proposal having been made to Mrs. Robert. But there had come upon all the Boltons a feeling that Robert was indifferent,—or, perhaps, even unwilling to undertake the task. And yet no one knew why. Mrs. Robert herself did not know why.

The reader, however, will know why, and will understand how it was that Mrs. Robert was in the dark. The attorney, though he was suspicious, though he was frightened, though he was, in truth, very angry with this new brother-in-law, through whose ante-nuptial delinquencies so much sorrow was threatened to the

Bolton family, nevertheless kept the secret from all the Cambridge Boltons. It had been necessary to him to seek counsel with someone, but he had mentioned the matter only to his brother William. But he did not wish to add to the bond which now tied him to Folking. If this horror, this possible horror, should fall upon them;—if it should turn out that he had insisted on giving his sister in marriage to a man already married,—then,—then,—then——! Such possible future incidents were too terrible to be considered closely, but with such a possibility he would not add to the bonds. At Puritan Grange they would throw all the responsibility of what had been done upon him. This feeling was mingled with his love for his sister,—with the indignation he would not only feel but show if it should turn out that she had been wronged. “I will destroy him,—I will destroy him utterly,” he would sometimes say to himself as he thought of it.

And now the godfather question had to be decided. “No,” he said to his wife, “I don’t care about such things. I won’t do it. You write and tell her that I have prejudices, or scruples, or whatever you choose to call it.”

“There is to be a little tarradiddle told, and I am to tell it?”

“I have prejudices and scruples.”

“About the religion of the thing?” She knew,—as, of course, she was bound to know,—that he had at any rate a round dozen of god-children somewhere about the country. There were the young Williams, and the young Daniels, and her own nephews and nieces, with the parents of all of whom Uncle Robert had been regarded as the very man for a godfather. The silversmith in Trumpington Street knew exactly

the weight of the silver cup that was to be given to the boy or to a girl. The Bible and prayer-books were equally well regulated. Mrs. Robert could not but smile at the idea of religious scruples. "I wish I knew what it was that has come over you of late. I fancy you have quarrelled with John Caldigate."

"If you think that, then you can understand the reason."

"What is it about?"

"I have not quarrelled with him. It is possible that I may have to do so. But I do not mean to say what it is about." Then he smiled. "I don't want you to ask any more questions, but just to write to Hester as kindly as you can, saying I don't mean to be godfather any more. It will be a good excuse in regard to all future babies." Mrs. Robert was a good wife and did as she was bid. She worded her refusal as cautiously as she could, and,—on that occasion,—asked her husband no further question.

The prayer that was addressed to the lady of Puritan Grange became the subject of much debate, of great consideration, and I may say also of lengthened prayer. To Mrs. Bolton this position of godmother implied much of the old sacred responsibility which was formerly attached to it, and which Robert Bolton, like other godfathers and godmothers of the day, had altogether ignored. She had been already partly brought round, nearly persuaded, in regard to the acceptance of John Caldigate as her son-in-law. It did not occur to her to do other than hate him. How was it possible that such a woman should do other than hate the man who had altogether got the better of her as to the very marrow of her life, the very apple of her eye? But she was alive to her duty towards her daughter; and

when she was told that the man was honest in his dealings, well-to-do in the world, a professing Christian who was constant in his parish church, she did not know how to maintain her opinion, that in spite of all this, he was an unregenerate castaway. Therefore, although she was determined still to hate him, she had almost made up her mind to enter his house. With these ideas she wrote a long letter to Hester, in which she promised to have herself taken out to Folking in order that she might be present as godmother at the baby's baptism. She would lunch at Folking, but must return to Chesterton before dinner. Even this was a great thing gained.

Then it was arranged that Daniel Bolton should stand as second godfather in place of his brother Robert.

CHAPTER XXVI

A STRANGER IN CAMBRIDGE

"I AM SORRY you will not come out to us to-morrow." On the day before the christening, which was at last fixed for a certain Tuesday in the middle of February, John Caldigate went into Cambridge, and at once called upon the attorney at his office. This he did partly instigated by his own feelings, and partly in compliance with his wife's wishes. Before that letter had come he and his brother-in-law had been fast friends; and now, though for a day or two he had been angry with what he had thought to be unjustifiable interference, he regretted the loss of such a friend. More than three months had now passed since the letter had come, but his mind was far from being at ease, and he felt that if trouble should come it would be very well for him to have Robert Bolton on his side.

"Margaret is going," said the attorney.

"Why do you not bring her?"

"Days are days with me, my boy. I can't afford to give up a morning for every baby that is born."

"That of course may be true, and if that is the reason, I have nothing more to say." As he spoke he looked in his brother-in-law's face, so as almost to prevent the possibility of continued pretence.

"Well, Caldigate, it isn't the reason altogether," said the other. "If you would have allowed it to pass without further explanation so would I. But if the

truth must be spoken in so many words, I will confess that I would rather not go out to Folking till I am sure we shall be no more troubled by your friends in Australia."

"Why not? Why should you not go out to Folking?"

"Simply because I may have to take an active part against you. I do not suppose it will come to that, but it is possible. I need not say that I trust there may be nothing of the kind, but I cannot be sure. It is on the cards."

"I think that is a hard judgment. Do you mean to say that you believe that woman's statement not only against mine, but against the whole tenor of my life and character?"

"No; I do not believe the woman's statement. If I did, I should not be talking to you now. The woman has probably lied, and is probably a tool in the hands of others for raising money, as you have already suggested. But, according to your own showing, there has been much in your life to authorise the statement. I do not know what does or does not constitute a marriage there."

"The laws are the same as ours."

"There at any rate you are wrong. Their marriage laws are not the same as ours, though how they may differ you and I probably do not accurately know. And they may be altered at any time as they may please. Let the laws be what they will, it is quite possible, after what you have told me, that they may bring up evidence which you would find it very difficult to refute. I don't think it will be so. If I did I should use all my influence to remove my sister at once."

"You couldn't do it," said Caldigate, very angrily.

"I tell you what I should endeavour to do. You must excuse me if I stand aloof just at present. I don't suppose you can defend such a condition of things as you described to me the other day."

"I do not mean to be put upon my defence,—at any rate by you," said Caldigate, very angrily. And then he left the office.

He had come into Cambridge with the intention of calling at Puritan Grange after he had left the attorney, and when he found himself in the street he walked on in the direction of Chesterton. He had wished to thank his wife's mother for her concession, and had been told by Hester that if he would call, Mrs. Bolton would certainly see him now. Had there been no letter from the woman in Australia, he would probably not have obeyed his wife's behest in this matter. His heart and spirit would then have been without a flaw, and, proud in his own strength and his own rectitude, he would have declared to himself that the absurd prejudices of a fanatic woman were beneath his notice. But that letter had been a blow, and the blow, though it had not quelled him, had weakened his forces. He could conceal the injury done him even from his wife, but there was an injury. He was not quite the man that he had been before. From day to day, and from hour to hour, he was always remonstrating with himself because it was so. He was conscious that in some degree he had been cowed, and was ever fighting against the feeling. His tenderness to his wife was perhaps increased, because he knew that she still suffered from the letter; but he was almost ashamed of his own tenderness, as being a sign of weakness. He made himself very busy in these days,—busy among his brother magistrates, busy among his farming op-

erations, busy with his tenants, busy among his books, so as to show to those around him that he was one who could perform all the duties of life, and enjoy all the pleasures, with an open brow and a clear conscience. He had been ever bold and self-asserting; but now he was perhaps a little over-bold. But through it all the Australian letter and the Australian woman were present to him day and night.

It was this resolution not to be quelled that had made him call upon the attorney at his office; and when he found himself back in the street he was very angry with the man. "If it pleases him, let it be so," he said to himself. "I can do in the world without him." And then he thought of that threat,—when the attorney had said that he would remove his sister. "Remove her! By heavens!" He had a stick in his hand, and as he went he struck it angrily against a post. Remove his wife! All the Boltons in Cambridgeshire could not put a hand upon her, unless by his leave! For some moments his anger supported him; but after a while that gave way to the old feeling of discomfort which pervaded him always. She was his wife, and nobody should touch her. Nevertheless he might find it difficult, as Robert Bolton had said, to prove that that other woman was not his wife.

Robert Bolton's office was in a small street close to Pembroke College, and when he came out of it he had intended to walk direct through Trumpington Street and Trinity Street to Chesterton. But he found it necessary to compose himself and so to arrange his thoughts that he might be able to answer such foolish questions as Mrs. Bolton would probably ask him without being flurried. He was almost sure that she had heard nothing of the woman. He did not suspect

Robert Bolton of treachery in that respect; but she would probably talk to him about the iniquity of his past life generally, and he must be prepared to answer her. It was incumbent upon him to shake off, before he reached Chesterton, that mixture of alarm and anger which at present dominated him; and with this object, instead of going straight along the street, he turned into the quadrangle of King's College, and passing through the gardens and over the bridge, wandered for a while slowly under the trees at the back of the college. He accused himself of a lack of manliness in that he allowed himself to be thus cowed. Did he not know that such threats as these were common? Was it not just what might have been expected from such a one as Crinkett, when Crinkett was driven to desperation by failing speculations? As he thought of the woman, he shook his head, looking down upon the ground. The woman had at one time been very dear to him. But it was clearly now his duty to go on as though there were no such woman as Euphemia Smith, and no such man as Thomas Crinkett. And as for Robert Bolton, he would henceforth treat him as though his anger and his suspicions were unworthy of notice. If the man should choose of his own accord to reassume the old friendly relations,—well and good. No overtures should come from him—Caldigate. And if the anger and the suspicions endured, why then, he, Caldigate, could do very well without Robert Bolton.

As he made these resolutions he turned in at a little gate opening into a corner of St. John's Gardens, with the object of passing through the college back into the streets of the town. It was not quite his nearest way, but he loved the old buildings, and the trees, and the river, even in winter. It still was winter, being now

the middle of February; but as it happened, the air was dry and mild, and the sun was shining. Still, he was surprised at such a time of the year to see an elderly man apparently asleep on one of the benches which are placed close to the path. But there he was asleep, with his two hands on a stick, and his head bent forward over his stick. It was impossible not to look at the man sleeping there in that way; but Caldigate would hardly have looked, would hardly have dared to look, could he have anticipated what he would see. The elderly man was Thomas Crinkett. As he passed he was quite sure that the man was Thomas Crinkett. When he had gone on a dozen yards, he paused for a moment to consider what he would do. A dozen different thoughts passed through his head in that moment of time. Why was the man there? Why, indeed, could he have come to England except with the view of prosecuting the demand which he and the woman had made? His presence even in England was sufficient to declare that this battle would have to be fought. But to Cambridge he could have come with no other object than that of beginning the attack at once. And then, had he already commenced his work? He had not at any rate been to Robert Bolton, to whom anyone knowing the family would have first referred him. And why was he sleeping there? Why was he not now at work upon his project? Again, would it be better at the present moment that he should pass by the man as though he had not seen him; or should he go back and ask him his purpose? As the thought passed through his mind, he stayed his step for a moment on the pathway and looked round. The man had moved his position, and was now sitting with his head turned away but evidently not asleep. Then it oc-

curred to Caldigate that Crinkett's slumbers had been only a pretence, that the man had seen and recognised him, and at the moment had not chosen to make himself known. And it occurred to him also that in a matter of such importance as this he should do nothing on the spur of the moment,—nothing without consideration. A word spoken to Crinkett, a word without consideration, might be fatal to him. So he passed on, having stood upon the path hardly more than a second or two.

Before he had got up to the new buildings of St. John's a cold sweat had come out all over him. He was conscious of this, and conscious also that for a time he was so confounded by the apparition of his enemy as to be unable to bring his mind to work properly on the subject. "Let him do his worst," he kept on saying to himself; "let him do his worst." But he knew that the brave words, though spoken only to himself, were mere braggadocio. No doubt the man would do his worst, and very bad it would be to him. At the moment he was so cowed by fear that he would have given half his fortune to have secured the woman's silence,—and the man's. How much better would it have been had he acceded to the man's first demand as to restitution of a portion of the sum paid for Polyeuka, before the woman's name had been brought into the matter at all?

But reflections such as these were now useless, and he must do something. It was for his wife's sake,—he assured himself,—for his wife's sake that he allowed himself to be made thus miserable by the presence of this wretched creature. What would she not be called upon to suffer? The woman no doubt would be brought before magistrates and judges, and would be made to swear that she was his wife. The whole story of his

life in Australia would be made public,—and there was so much that could not be made public without overwhelming her with sorrow! His own father, too, who had surrendered the estate to him, must know it all. His father hitherto had not heard the name of Mrs. Smith, and had been told only of Crinkett's dishonest successes and dishonest failures. When Caldigate had spoken of Crinkett to his father, he had done so with a triumph as of a man whom he had weighed and measured and made use of,—whose frauds and cunning he had conquered by his own honesty and better knowledge. Now he could no longer weigh and measure and make use of Crinkett. Crinkett had been a joke to him in talking with his father. But Crinkett was no joke now.

While walking through the College quad, he was half stupefied by his confusion, and was aware that such was his condition. But going out under the gate he paused for a moment and shook himself. He must at any rate summon his own powers to his aid at the moment and resolve what he would do. However bad all this might be, there was a better course and a worse. If he allowed this confusion to master him he would probably be betrayed into the worse course. Now, at this moment, in what way would it become him to act? He drew himself together, shaking his head and shoulders,—so as to shake off his weakness,—pressing his foot for a moment on the earth so as to convince himself of his own firmness, and then he resolved.

He was on the way out to see his mother-in-law, but he thought that nothing now could be gained by going to Chesterton. It was not impossible that Crinkett might have been there. If so the man would have told something of his story; and his wife's mother was

the last person in the world whom, under such circumstances, he could hope to satisfy. He must tell no lie to anyone; he must at least conceal nothing of the things as they occurred now. He must not allow it to be first told by Crinkett that they two had seen each other in the Gardens. But he could not declare this to Mrs. Bolton. For the present, the less he saw of Mrs. Bolton the better. She would come to the christening to-morrow,—unless indeed Crinkett had already told enough to induce her to change her mind,—but after that any intimacy with the house of Chesterton had better be postponed till this had all been settled.

But how much would have to be endured before that! Robert Bolton had almost threatened to take his wife away from him. No one could take his wife away from him,—unless, indeed, the law were to say that she was not his wife. But how would it be with him if she herself, under the influence of her family, were to wish to leave him! The law no doubt would give him the custody of his own wife, till the law had said that she was not his wife. But could he keep her if she asked him to let her go? And should she be made to doubt,—should her mind be so troubled as it would be should she once be taught to think it possible that she had been betrayed,—would she not then want to go from him? Would it not be probable that she would doubt when she should be told that this woman had been called by her husband's name in Australia, and when he should be unable to deny that he had admitted, or at least had not contradicted, the appellation?

On a sudden, when he turned away from the street leading to Chesterton as he came out of the College, he resolved that he would at once go back to Robert Bolton. The man was offensive, suspicious, and self-

willed; but, nevertheless, his good services, if they could be secured, would be all important. For his wife's sake, as Caldigate said to himself,—for his wife's sake he must bear much. "I have come to tell you something that has occurred since I was here just now," said Caldigate, meeting his brother-in-law at the door of the office. "Would you mind coming back?"

"I am rather in a hurry."

"It is of importance, and you had better hear it," said Caldigate, leading the way imperiously to the inner room. "It is for your sister's sake. That man Crinkett is in Cambridge."

"In Cambridge?"

"I saw him just now."

"And spoke to him?" the attorney asked.

"No. I passed him; and I do not know even whether he recognised me. But he is here, in Cambridge."

"And the woman?"

"I have told you all that I know. He has not come here for nothing."

"Probably not," said the attorney, with a scornful smile. "You will hear of him before long."

"Of course I shall. I have come to you now to ask a question. I must put my case at once into a lawyer's hands. Crinkett, no doubt, will commit perjury, and I must undergo the annoyance and expense of proving him to be a perjurer. She probably is here also, and will be ready to commit perjury. Of course I must have a lawyer. Will you act for me?"

"I will act for my sister."

"Your sister and I are one; and I am obliged, therefore, to ask again whether you will act for me? Of course I should prefer it. Though you are, I think, hard to me in this matter, I can trust you implicitly.

It will be infinitely better for Hester that it should be so. But I must have some lawyer."

"And so must she."

"Hers and mine must be the same. As to that I will not admit any question. Can you undertake to fight this matter on my behalf,—and on hers? If you feel absolutely hostile to me you had better decline. For myself, I cannot understand why there should be such hostility."

Caldigate had so far conquered his own feelings of abasement as to be able to say this with a determined face, looking straight into the attorney's eyes, at any rate without sign of fear.

"It wants thinking about," said Robert Bolton.

"To-morrow the baby is to be christened, and for Hester's sake I will endeavour to put this matter aside;—but on Wednesday I must know."

"On Wednesday morning I will answer your question. But what if this man comes to me in the meantime?"

"Listen to him or speak to him, just as seems good to you. You know everything that there is to tell, and may therefore know whether he lies or speaks the truth."

Then Caldigate went to the inn, got his horse, and rode back to Folking.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE CHRISTENING

THE next day was the day of the christening. Caldigate, on his return home from Cambridge, had felt himself doomed to silence. He could not now at this moment tell his wife that the man had come,—the man who would doubtless work her such terrible misery. She was very strong. She had gone through the whole little event of her baby's birth quite as well as could be expected, and had been just what all her friends might have wished her to be. But that this blow had fallen upon her,—but that these ill news had wounded her,—she would now have been triumphant. Her mother was at last coming to her. Her husband was all that a husband should be. Her baby was, to her thinking, sweeter, brighter, more satisfactory than any other baby ever had been. But the first tidings had been told to her. She had seen the letter signed "Euphemia Caldigate"; and of course she was ill at ease. Knowing how vexatious the matter was to her husband, she had spoken of it but seldom,—having asked but a question now and again when the matter pressed itself too severely on her mind. He understood it all, both her reticence and her sufferings. Her sufferings must of course be increased. She must know before long that Crinkett, and probably the woman also, were in her neighbourhood. But he could not tell her now when she was preparing her baby for his ceremony in the church.

The bells were rung, and the baby was prepared, and Mrs. Bolton came out to Folking according to her promise. Though Robert was not there, many of the Boltons were present, as was also Uncle Babington. He had come over on the preceding evening, making on this occasion his first journey to Folking since his wife's sister had died; and the old squire was there in very good humour, though he excused himself from going to the church by explaining that as he had no duty to perform he would only be in the way amongst them all. Daniel and Mrs. Bolton had also been at Folking that night, and had then for the first time been brought into contact with the Babington grandeur. The party had been almost gay, the old squire having taken some delight in what he thought to be the absurdities of his brother-in-law. Mr. Babington himself was a man who was joyous on most occasions, and always gay on such an occasion as this. He had praised the mother, and praised the baby, and praised the house of Folking generally, graciously declaring that his wife looked forward to the pleasure of making acquaintance with her new niece, till old Mr. Caldigate had been delighted with these manifestations of condescension. "Folking is a poor place," said he, "but Babington is really a country-house."

"Yes," replied the other squire, much gratified, "Babington is what you may call really a good country-house."

You had to laugh very hard at him before you could offend Uncle Babington. In all this John Caldigate was obliged to assist, knowing all the time, feeling all the time, that Crinkett was in Cambridge; and through all this the young mother had to appear happy, knowing the existence of that letter signed "Euphemia Caldi-

gate,"—feeling it at every moment. And they both acted their parts well. Caldigate himself,—though when he was alone the thought of what was coming would almost crush him,—could always bear himself bravely when others were present.

On the morning before they went to church, when the bells were ringing, old Mr. Bolton came in a carriage with his wife from Cambridge. She, of course, condescended to give her hand to her son-in-law, but she did it with a look which was full of bitterness. She did not probably intend to be specially bitter, but bitterness of expression was common to her. She was taken, however, at once up to the baby, and then in the presence of her daughter and grandchild it may be presumed that she relaxed a little. At any rate, her presence in the house made her daughter happy for the time.

Then they all went to the church, except the squire, who, as he himself pleaded, had no duty to perform there. Mrs. Bolton, as she was taken through the hall, saw him and recognised him, but would not condescend even to bow her head to him, though she knew how intimate he had been with her husband. She still felt,—though she had yielded for this day, this day which was to make her grandchild a Christian,—that there must be, and should be, a severance between people such as the Boltons and people such as the Caldigates.

As the service went on, and as the water was sprinkled, and as the prayers were said, Caldigate felt thankful that so much had been allowed to be done before the great trouble had disclosed itself. The doubt whether even the ceremony could be performed before the clap of thunder had been heard through all Cambridge had been in itself a distinct sorrow to him.

Had Crinkett showed himself at Chesterton, neither Mrs. Bolton nor Daniel Bolton would have been standing then at the font. Had Crinkett been heard of at Babington, Uncle Babington would not now have been at Folking. All this was passing through his mind as he was standing by the font. When the ceremony of making the young Daniel Humphrey Caldigate a Christian was all but completed, he fancied that he saw old Mr. Bolton's eyes fixed on something in the church, and he turned his head suddenly, with no special purpose, but simply looking, as one is apt to look, when another looks. There he saw, on a seat divided from himself by the breadth of the little nave, Thomas Crinkett sitting with another man.

There was not a shadow of a doubt on his mind as to the identity of the Australian—nor as to that of Crinkett's companion. At the moment he did not remember the man's name, but he knew him as a miner with whom he had been familiar at Ahalala, and who had been in partnership both with himself and Crinkett at Nobble,—as one who had, alas! been in his society when Euphemia Smith had been there also. At that instant he remembered the fact that the man had called Euphemia Smith Mrs. Caldigate in his presence, and that he had let the name pass without remonstrance. The memory of that moment flashed across him now as he quickly turned back his face towards his child who was still uttering his little wail in the arms of the clergyman.

Utterden church is not a large building. The seat on which Crinkett had placed himself was one usually occupied by parish boys at the end of the row of appropriated seats and near to the door. Less than half-a-dozen yards from it, at the other side of the way

leading up the church, stood the font, so that the stranger was almost close to Caldigate when he turned. They were so near that others there could not but have observed them. Even the clergyman, however absorbed he might have been in his sacred work, could not but have observed them. It was not there as it might have been in a town. Any stranger, even on a Sunday, would be observed by all in Utterden church,—how much then at a ceremony which, as a rule, none but friends attend! And Crinkett was looking on with all his eyes, leaning forward over his stick and watching closely. Caldigate had taken it all in, even in that moment. The other man was sitting back, gazing at nothing, as though the matter to him were indifferent. Caldigate could understand it all. The man was there simply to act or to speak when he might be wanted.

As the ceremony was completed John Caldigate stood by and played with all proper words and actions the part of the young father. No one standing there could see by his face that he had been struck violently; that he had for a few moments been almost unable to stand. But he himself was aware that a cold sweat had broken out all over him as before. Though he leaned over the baby lying in his mother's arms and kissed it, and smiled on the young mother, he did so as some great actor will carry out his part before the public when nearly sinking to the ground from sudden suffering. What would it be right that he should do now,—now, —now? No one there had heard of Crinkett except his wife. And even she herself had no idea that the man of whom she had heard was in England. Should he speak to the man, or should he endeavour to pass out of the church as though he had not recognised him? Could he trust himself even to make the endeavour

when he should have turned round and when he would find himself face to face with the man?

And then what would he say, and how should he act, if the man addressed him in the church? The man had not come out there to Utterden for nothing, and probably would so address him. He had determined on telling no lie,—no lie, at any rate, as to present circumstances. That life of his in Australia had been necessarily rough; and though successful, had not been quite as it should have been. As to that, he thought that it ought to be permitted to him to be reticent. But as to nothing since his marriage would he lie. If Crinkett spoke to him he must acknowledge the man,—but if Crinkett told his story about Euphemia Smith in the church before them all, how should he then answer? There was but a moment for him to decide it all. The decision had to be made while he was handing back his babe to its mother with his sweetest smile.

As the party at the font was broken up, the eyes of them all were fixed upon the two strangers. A christening in a public church is a public service, and open to the world at large. There was no question to be asked them, but each person as he looked at them would of course think that somebody else would recognise them. They were decently dressed,—dressed probably in such garments as gentlemen generally wear on winter mornings,—but anyone would know at a glance that they were not English gentlemen. And they were of an appearance unfamiliar to anyone there but Caldigate himself,—clean, but rough, not quite at home in their clothes, which had probably been bought ready-made; with rough, ignoble faces,—faces which you would suspect, but faces, nevertheless, which had in them something of courage. As the little crowd

prepared to move from the font, the two men got up and stood in their places.

Caldigate took the opportunity to say a word to Mr. Bromley before he turned round, so that he might yet pause before he decided. At that moment he resolved that he would recognise his enemy, and treat him with the courtesy of old friendship. It would be bad to do at the moment, but he thought that in this way he might best prepare himself for the future. Crinkett had appealed to him for money, but Crinkett himself had said nothing to him about Euphemia Smith. The man had not as yet accused him of bigamy. The accusation had come from her, and it still might be that she had used Crinkett's name wrongfully. At any rate, he thought that when the clap of thunder should have come, it would be better for him not to have repudiated a man with whom it would then be known that his relations had once been so intimate.

He addressed himself therefore at once to his old associate. "I am surprised to see you here, Mr. Crinkett." This he said with a smile and a pleasant voice, putting out his hand to him. How hard it was to summon up that smile! How hard to get that tone of voice! Even those commonplace words had been so difficult of selection! "Was it you I saw yesterday in the College gardens?"

"Yes, it was me, no doubt."

"I turned round, and then thought that it was impossible. We have just been christening my child. Will you come up to our breakfast?"

"You remember Jack Adamson,—eh?"

"Of course I do," said Caldigate, giving his hand to the second man, who was rougher even than Crinkett. "I hope he will come up also. This is my uncle, Mr.

Babington; and this is my father-in-law, Mr. Bolton.” “These were two of my partners at Nobble,” he said, turning to the two old gentlemen, who were looking on with astonished eyes. “They have come over here, I suppose, with reference to the sale I made to them lately of my interests at Polyeuka.”

“That’s about it,” said Adamson.

“We won’t talk business just at this moment, because we have to eat our breakfast and drink our boy’s health. But when that is done, I’ll hear what you have to say;—or come into Cambridge to-morrow, just as you please. You’ll walk up to the house now, and I’ll introduce you to my wife?”

“We don’t mind if we do eat a bit,—do we, Jack?” said Crinkett. Jack bobbed his head, and so they walked back to Folking, the three of them together, while the two Mr. Boltons and Uncle Babington followed behind. The ladies and the baby had been taken in a carriage.

The distance from the church to the house at Folking was less than half a mile, but Caldigate thought that he would never reach his hall door. How was he to talk to the men,—with what words and after what fashion? And what should he say about them to his wife when he reached home? She had seen him speak to them, had known that he had been obliged to stay behind with them when it would have been so natural that he should have been at her side as she got into the carriage. Of that he was aware, but he could not know how far their presence would have frightened her. “Yes,” he said, in answer to some question from Crinkett; “the property round here is not exactly mine, but my father’s.”

“They tell me as it’s yours now?” said Crinkett.

"You haven't to learn to-day that in regard to other people's concerns men talk more than they know. The land is my father's estate, but I live here."

"And him?" asked Adamson.

"He lives in Cambridge."

"That's what we mean,—ain't it, Crinkett?" said Adamson. "You're boss here?"

"Yes, I'm boss."

"And a deuced good time you seem to have of it," said Crinkett.

"I've nothing to complain of," replied Caldigate, feeling himself at the moment to be the most miserable creature in existence.

It was fearful work,—work so cruel that his physical strength hardly enabled him to support it. He already repented his present conduct, telling himself that it would have been better to have treated the men from the first as spies and enemies;—though in truth his conduct had probably been the wisest he could have adopted. At last he had the men inside the hall door, and, introducing them hurriedly to his father, he left them that he might rush up to his wife's bedroom. The nurse was there and her mother; and, at the moment, she only looked at him. She was too wise to speak to him before them. But at last she succeeded in making an opportunity of being alone with her husband. "You stay here, nurse; I'll be back directly, mamma," and then she took him across the passage into his own dressing-room. "Who are they, John? Who are they?"

"They are men from the mines. As they were my partners, I have asked them to come in to breakfast."

"And the woman?" As she spoke she held on to

the back of the chair by which she stood, and only whispered her question.

"No woman is with them."

"Is it the man,—Crinkett?"

"Yes, it is Crinkett."

"In this house! And I am to sit at the table with him?"

"It will be best so. Listen, dearest; all that I know, all that we know of Crinkett is, that he is asking money of me because the purchase he made of me has turned out badly for him."

"But he is to marry that woman, who says that she is——" Then she stopped, looking into his face with agony. She could not bring herself to utter the word which would signify that another woman claimed to be her husband's wife.

"You are going too fast, Hester. I cannot condemn the man for what the woman has written until I know that he says the same himself. He was my partner, and I have had his money;—I fear, all his money. He as yet has said nothing about the woman. As it is so, it behoves me to be courteous to him. That I am suffering much, you must be well aware. I am sure you will not make it worse for me."

"No, no," she said, embracing him; "I will not. I will be brave. I will do all that I can. But you will tell me everything?"

"Everything," he said. Then he kissed her, and went back again to his unwelcome guests. She was not long before she followed him, bringing her baby in her arms. Then she took the child round to be kissed by all its relatives, and afterwards bowed politely to the two men, and told them that she was glad to see her husband's old friends and fellow-workmen.

"Yes, mum," said Jack Adamson; "we've been fellow-workmen when the work was hard enough. 'T young squire seems to have got over his difficulties pretty tidy!" Then she smiled again, and nodded to them, and retreated back to her mother.

Mrs. Bolton scowled at them, feeling certain that they were godless persons;—in which she was right. The old banker, drawing his son Daniel out of the room, whispered an inquiry; but Daniel Bolton knew nothing. "There's been something wrong as to the sale of that mine," said the banker. Daniel Bolton thought it probable that here had been something wrong.

The breakfast was eaten, and the child's health was drunk, and the hour was passed. It was a bad time for them all, but for Caldigate it was a very bitter hour. To him the effort made was even more difficult than to her;—as was right;—for she at any rate had been blameless. Then the Boltons went away, as had been arranged, and also Uncle Babington, while the men still remained.

"If you don't mind, squire, I'll take a turn with you," said Crinkett at last; "while Jack can sit anywhere about the place.

"Certainly," said Caldigate. And so they took their hats and went off, and Jack Adamson was left "sitting anywhere" about the place.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TOM CRINKETT AT FOLKING

CALDIGATE thought that he had better take his companion where there would be the least chance of encountering many eyes. He went therefore through the garden into the farmyard, and along the road leading back to the dike, and then he walked backwards and forwards between the ferry, over the Wash, and the termination of the private way by which they had come. The spot was not attractive, as far as rural prettiness was concerned. They had, on one hand or the other as they turned, the long, straight, deep dike which had been cut at right angles to the Middle Wash; and around, the fields were flat, plashy, and heavy-looking with the mud of February. But Crinkett for a while did not cease to admire everything. "And them are all yourn?" he said, pointing to a crowd of corn-stacks standing in the haggard.

"Yes, they're mine. I wish they were not."

"What do you mean by that?"

"As prices are at present, a man doesn't make much by growing corn and keeping it to this time of the year."

"And where them chimneys is—is that yourn?" This he said pointing along the straight line of the road to Farmer Holt's homestead, which showed itself on the other side of the Wash.

"It belongs to the estate," said Caldigate.

"By jingo! And how I remember your a-coming and talking to me across the gate at Polyeuka Hall!"

"I remember it very well."

"I didn't know as you were an estated gent in those days."

"I had spent a lot of money when I was young, and the estate, as you call it, was not large enough to bear the loss. So I had to go out and work, and get back what I had squandered."

"And you did it?"

"Yes, I did it?"

"My word, yes! What a lot of money you took out of the colony, Caldigate!"

"I'm not going to praise myself, but I worked hard for it, and when I got it I didn't run riot."

"Not with drink."

"Nor in any other way. I kept my money."

"Well;—I don't know as you was very much more of a Joseph than anybody else." Then Crinkett laughed most disagreeably; and Caldigate, turning over various ideas rapidly in his mind, thought a good deed would be done if a man so void of feeling could be drowned beneath the waters of the black deep dike which was slowly creeping along by their side. "Any way you was lucky,—infernally lucky."

"You did not do badly yourself. When I first reached Nobble you had the name of more money than I ever made."

"Who's got it now? Eh, Caldigate! who's got my money now?"

"It would take a clever man to tell that."

"It don't take much cleverness for me to tell who has got more of it nor anybody else, and it don't take much cleverness for me to tell that I ain't got none of

it left myself;—none of it, Caldigate. Not a d— hundred pounds!” This he said with terrible energy.

“I’m sorry it’s so bad as that with you, Crinkett.”

“Yes;—you is sorry, I daresay. You’ve acted sorry in all you said and done since I got taken in last by that — mine;—haven’t you? Well;—I have got just a few hundreds; what I could scrape together to bring me and a few others as might be wanted over to England. There’s Jack Adamson with me and — just two more. They may be wanted, squire.”

The attack now was being commenced, and how was he to repel it, or to answer it? Only on one ground had he received from Robert Bolton a decided opinion. Under no circumstances was he to give money to these persons. Were he to be guilty of that weakness he would have delivered himself over into their hands. And not only did he put implicit trust in the sagacity of Robert Bolton, but he himself knew enough of the world’s opinion on such a matter to be aware that a man who has allowed himself to be frightened out of money is supposed to have acknowledged some terrible delinquency. He had been very clear in his mind when that letter came from Euphemia Smith that he would not now make any rebate. Till that attack had come, it might have been open to him to be generous;—but not now. And yet when this man spoke of his own loss, and reminded him of his wealth;—when Crinkett threw it in his teeth that by a happy chance he had feathered his nest with the spoils taken from the wretched man himself,—then he wished that it was in his power to give back something.

“Is that said as a threat?” he asked, looking round on his companion, and resolving that he would be brave.

"That's as you take it, squire. We don't want to threaten nothing."

"Because if you do, you'd better go, and do what you have to do away from here."

"Don't you be so rough now with an old pal. You won't do no good by being rough. I wasn't rough to you when you came to Polyeuca Hall without very much in your pocket." This was untrue, for Crinkett had been rough, and Caldigate's pockets had been full of money; but there could be no good got by contradicting him on small trifles. "I was a good mate to you then. You wouldn't even have got your finger into the 'Old Stick-in-the-Mud,' nor yet into Polyeuca, but for me. I was the making of your fortin, Caldigate. I was."

"My fortune, such as it is, was made by my own industry."

"Industry be blowed! I don't know that you were so much better than anybody else. Wasn't I industrious? Wasn't I thinking of it morning, noon, and night, and nothing else? You was smart. I do allow that, Caldigate. You was very smart."

"Did you ever know me dishonest?"

"Pooh! what's honesty? There's nothing so smart as honesty. Whatever you got, you got a sure hold of. That's what you mean by honesty. You was clever enough to take care as you had really got it. Now about this Polyeuca business, I'll tell you how it is. I and Jack Adamson and another,"—as he alluded to the "other" he winked,—“we believed in Polyeuca; we did. D—the cussed hole! Well;—when you was gone we thought we'd try it. It was not easy to get the money as you wanted, but we got it. One of the banks down at Sydney went shares, but took all the

plant as security. Then the cussed place ran out the moment the money was paid. It was just as though fortin had done it a purpose. If you don't believe what I'm a-saying, I've got the documents to show you."

Caldigate did believe what the man said. It was a matter as to which he had, in the way of business, received intelligence of his own from the colony, and he was aware that he had been singularly lucky as to the circumstances and time of the sale. But there had been nothing "smart" about it. Those in the colony who understood the matter thought at the time that he was making a sacrifice of his own interests by the terms proposed. He had thought so himself, but had been willing to make it in order that he might rid himself of further trouble. He had believed that the machinery and plant attached to the mine had been nearly worth the money, and he had been quite certain that Crinkett himself, when making the bargain, had considered himself to be in luck's way. But such property, as he well knew, was, by its nature, precarious, and liable to sudden changes. He had been fortunate, and the purchasers had been the reverse. Of that he had no doubt, though probably the man had exaggerated his own misfortune. When he had been given to understand how bad had been the fate of these old companions of his in the matter, with the feelings of a liberal gentleman he was anxious to share with them the loss. Had Crinkett come to him, explaining all that he now explained, without any interference from Euphemia Smith, he would have been anxious to do much. But now;—how could he do anything now? "I do not at all disbelieve what you tell me about the mine," he said.

"And yet you won't do anything for us? You ain't

above taking all our money and seeing us starve; and that when you have got everything round you here like an estated gentleman, as you are?"

There was a touch of eloquence in this, a soundness of expostulation which moved him much. He could afford to give back half the price he had received for the mine and yet be a well-to-do man. He paid over to his father the rents from Folking, but he had the house and home-farm for nothing. And the sum which he had received for Polyeuka by no means represented all his savings. He did not like to think that he had denuded this man who had been his partner of everything in order that he himself might be unnecessarily rich. It was not pleasant to him to think that the fatness of his opulence had been extracted from Jack Adamson and from—Euphemia Smith. When the application for return of the money had been first made to him from Australia, he hadn't known what he knew now. There had been no eloquence then,—no expostulation. Now he thoroughly wished that he was able to make restitution. "A threat has been used to me," he muttered, almost anxious to explain to the man his exact position.

"A threat! I ain't threatened nothing. But I tell you there will be threats and worse than threats. Fair means first and foul means afterwards. That's about it, Caldigate."

If he could have got this man to say that there was no threat, to be simply pious, he thought that he might even yet have suggested some compromise. But that was impossible when he was told that worse than threats were in store for him. He was silent for some moments, thinking whether it would not be better for him to rush into that matter of Euphemia Smith

himself. But up to this time he had no absolute knowledge that Crinkett was aware of the letter which had been written. No doubt that in speaking of "another" as being joined with himself and Adamson he had intended that Euphemia Smith should be understood. But till her name had been mentioned, he could not bring himself to mention it. He could not bring himself to betray the fear which would become evident if he spoke of the woman.

"I think you had better go to my lawyer," he said.

"We don't want no lawyering. The plunder is yours, no doubt. Whether you'll have so much law on your side in other matters,—that's the question." Crinkett did not in the least understand the state of his companion's mind. To Crinkett it appeared that Caldigate was simply anxious to save his money.

"I do not know that I can say anything else to you just at present. The bargain was a fair bargain, and you have no ground for any claim. You come to me with some mysterious threat——"

"You understand," said Crinkett.

"I care nothing for your threats. I can only bid you go and do your worst."

"That's what we intend."

"That you should have lost money by me is a great sorrow to me."

"You look sorry, squire."

"But after what you have said, I can make you no offer. If you will go to my brother-in-law, Mr. Robert Bolton——"

"That's the lady's brother?"

"My wife's brother."

"I know all about it, Caldigate. I won't go to him at all. What's he to us? It ain't likely that I am going

to ask him for money to hold our tongues. Not a bit of it. You've had sixty thousand pounds out of that mine. The bank found twenty and took all the plant. There's forty gone. Will you share the loss? Give us twenty and we'll be off back to Australia by the first ship. And I'll take a wife back with me. You understand? I'll take a wife back with me. Then we shall be all square all round."

With what delight would he have given the twenty thousand pounds, had he dared! Had there been no question about the woman, he would have given the money to satisfy his own conscience as to the injury he had involuntarily done to his old partners. But he could not do it now. He could make no suggestion towards doing it. To do so would be to own to all the Boltions that Mrs. Euphemia Smith was his wife. And were he to do so, how could he make himself secure that the man and the woman would go back to Australia and trouble him no more? All experience forbade him to hope for such a result. And then the payment of the money would be one of many damning pieces of evidence against him. They had now got back for the second time to the spot at which the way up to the house at Folking turned off from the dike. Here he paused and spoke what were intended to be his last words. "I have nothing more to say, Crinkett. I will not promise anything myself. A threatened man should never give way. You know that yourself. But if you will go to my brother-in-law I will get him to see you."

"D—— your brother-in-law. He ain't your brother-in-law, no more than I am."

Now the sword had been drawn and the battle had been declared. "After that," said Caldigate, walking

on in front, "I shall decline to speak to you any further." He went back through the farm-yard at a quick pace, while Crinkett kept up with him, but still a few steps behind. In the front of the house they found Jack Adamson, who, in obedience to his friend's suggestion, had been sitting anywhere about the place.

"I'm blowed if he don't mean to stick to every lump he's robbed us of!" said Crinkett, in a loud voice.

"He do, do he? Then we know what we've got to be after."

"I've come across some of 'em precious mean," continued Crinkett; "but a meaner skunk nor this estated gent, who is a justice of the peace and a squire and all that, I never did come across, and I don't suppose I never shall." And then they stood looking at him, jeering at him. And the gardener, who was then in front of the house, heard it all.

"Darvell," said the squire, "open the gate for these gentlemen." Darvell of course knew that they had been brought from the church to the house, and had been invited in to the christening breakfast.

"If I were Darvell I wouldn't take wages from such a skunk as you," said Crinkett. "A man as has robbed his partners of every shilling, and has married a young lady when he has got another wife living out in the colony. At least she was out in the colony. She ain't there now, Darvell. She's somewhere else now. That's what your master is, Darvell. You'll have to look out for a place, because your master'll be in quod before long. How much is it they get's for bigamy, Jack? Three years at the treadmill;—that's about it. But I pities the young lady and the poor little bastard."

What was he to do? A sense of what was fitting for his wife rather than for himself forbade him to

fly at the man and take him by the throat. And now, of course, the wretched story would be told through all Cambridgeshire. Nothing could prevent that now. "Darvell," he said, as he turned towards the hall steps, "you must see these men off the premises. The less you say to them the better."

"We'll only just tell him all about it as we goes along comfortable," said Adamson. Darvell, who was a good sort of man in his way,—slow rather than stupid, weighted with the ordinary respect which a servant has for his master,—had heard it all, but showed no particular anxiety to hear more. He accompanied the men down to the Causeway, hardly opening his mouth to them, while they were loud in denouncing the meanness of the man who had deserted a wife in Australia, and had then betrayed a young lady here in England.

"What were they talking about?" said his wife to him when they were alone. "I heard their voices even here."

"They were threatening me;—threatening me and you."

"About that woman?"

"Yes; about that woman. Not that they have dared yet to mention her name,—but it was about that woman."

"And she?"

"I've heard nothing from her since that letter. I do not know that she is in England, but I suppose that she is with them."

"Does it make you unhappy, John?"

"Very unhappy."

"Does it frighten you?"

"Yes. It makes me fear that you for a while will be made miserable,—you whom I had thought that I

could protect from all sorrow and from all care! O my darling! of course it frightens me; but it is for you."

"What will they do first, John?"

"They have already said words before the man there which will of course be spread about the country."

"What words?"

Then he paused, but after pausing he spoke very plainly. "They said that you were not my wife."

"But I am."

"Indeed you are."

"Tell me all truly. Though I were not, I would still be true to you."

"But, Hester,—Hester, you are. Do not speak as though that were possible."

"I know that you love me. I am sure of that. Nothing should ever make me leave you;—nothing. You are all the world to me now. Whatever you may have done I will be true to you. Only tell me everything."

"I think I have," he said, hoarsely. Then he remembered that he had told much to Robert Bolton which she had not heard. "I did tell her that I would marry her."

"You did."

"Yes, I did."

"Is not that a marriage in some countries?"

"I think nowhere,—certainly not there. And the people, hearing of it all, used to call her by my name."

"O John!—will not that be against us!"

"It will be against me,—in the minds of persons like your mother."

"I will care nothing for that. I know that you have repented, and are sorry. I know that you love me now."

“I have always loved you since the first moment that I saw you.”

“Never for a moment believe that I will believe them. Let them do what they will, I will be your wife. Nothing shall take me away from you. But it is sad, is it not; on the very day that poor baby has been christened?” Then they sat and wept together, and tried to comfort each other. But nothing could comfort him. He was almost prostrated at the prospect of his coming misery,—and of hers.

CHAPTER XXIX

“JUST BY TELLING ME THAT I AM”

THE thunderbolt had fallen now. Caldigate, when he left his wife that he might stroll about the place after the dusk had fallen, told himself again and again that the thunderbolt had certainly fallen now. There could be no longer a doubt but that this woman would claim him as her husband. A whole world of remorse and regrets oppressed his conscience and his heart. He looked back and remembered the wise counsels which had been given him on board the ship, when the captain and Mrs. Callander and poor Dick Shand had remonstrated with him, and called to mind his own annoyance when he had bidden them mind their own affairs. And then he remembered how he had determined to break away from the woman at Sydney, and to explain to her, as he might then have done without injustice, that they two could be of no service the one to the other, and that they had better part. It seemed now, as he looked back, to have been so easy for him then to have avoided danger, so easy to have kept a straight course! But now,—now, surely he would be overwhelmed.

And then how easy it would have been, had he been more careful at the beginning of these troubles, to have bought these wretches off! He had been, he now acknowledged, too peremptory in his first refusal to refund a portion of the money to Crinkett. The application had, indeed, been made without those proofs as

to the condition of the mine which had since reached him, and he had distrusted Crinkett. Crinkett he had known to be a man not to be trusted. But yet, even after receiving the letter from Euphemia Smith, the matter might have been arranged. When he had first become assured that the new Polyetka Company had failed, he should have made an offer, even though Euphemia Smith had then commenced her threats. With skill, might he not have done it on this very day? Might he not have made the man understand that if he would base his claim simply on his losses, and make it openly on that ground, then his claim should be considered? But now it was too late, and the thunderbolt had fallen.

What must he do first? Robert Bolton had promised to tell him on the morrow whether he would act for him as his lawyer. He felt sure now that his brother-in-law would not do so; but it would be necessary that he should have an answer, and that necessity would give him an excuse for going into Cambridge and showing himself among the Boltons. Let his sufferings or his fears be what they might, he would never confess to the world that he suffered or that he was frightened, by shutting himself up. He would be seen about Cambridge, walking openly, as though no reports, no rumours, had been spread about concerning him. He would go to the houses of his wife's relations until he should be told that he was not welcome.

“John,” his wife said to him that night, “bear it like a man.”

“Am I not bearing it like a man?”

“It is crushing your very heart. I see it in your eyes.”

“Can you bear it?” He asked his question with a

stern voice; but as he asked it he turned to her and kissed her.

"Yes," she said, "yes. While I have you with me, and baby, I can bear anything. While you will tell me everything that happens, I will bear everything. And, John, when you were out just now, and when I am alone and trying to pray, I told myself that I ought not to be unhappy; for I would sooner have you and baby and all these troubles, than be back at Chesterton—without you."

"I wish you were back there. I wish you had never seen me."

"If you say that, then I shall be crushed."

"For your sake, my darling; for your sake,—for your sake! How shall I comfort you when all those around you are saying that you are not my wife?"

"By telling me that I am," she said, coming and kneeling at his feet, and looking up into his face. "If you say so, you may be sure that I shall believe no one who says the contrary."

It was thus, and only now, that he began to know the real nature of the woman whom he had succeeded in making his own, and of whom he found now that even her own friends would attempt to rob him. "I will bear it," he said, as he embraced her. "I will bear it, if I can, like a man."

"Oh, ma'am! those men were saying horrid things," her nurse said to her that night.

"Yes; very horrid things. I know it all. It is part of a wicked plot to rob Mr. Caldigate of his money. It is astonishing the wickedness that people will contrive. It is very sad. I don't know how long it may be before Mr. Caldigate can prove it all."

“ But he can prove it all, ma’am? ”

“ Of course he can. The truth can always be proved at last. I trust there will be no one about the place to doubt him. If there were such a one, I would not speak to him,—though it were my own father; though it were my own mother.” Then she took the baby in her arms, as though fearing that the nurse herself might not be loyal.

“ I don’t think there will be any as knows master, will be wrong enough for that,” said the nurse, understanding what was expected of her. After that, but not quite readily, the baby was once more trusted to her.

On the following morning Caldigate rode into the town, and as he put his horse up at the inn, he felt that the very ostler had heard the story. As he walked along the street, it seemed to him that everyone he met knew all about it. Robert Bolton would, of course, have heard it; but nevertheless he walked boldly into the attorney’s office. His fault at the time was in being too bold in manner, in carrying himself somewhat too erect, in assuming too much confidence in his eye and mouth. To act a part perfectly requires a consummate actor; and there are phases in life in which acting is absolutely demanded. A man cannot always be at his ease, but he should never seem to be discomfited. For petty troubles the amount of acting necessary is so common that habit has made it almost natural. But when great sorrows come it is hard not to show them,—and harder still not to seem to hide them.

When he entered the private room he found that the old man was there with his son. He shook hands, of course, with both of them, and then he stood a moment silent to hear how they would address him. But as they also were silent he was compelled to speak. “ I

hope you got home all right, sir, yesterday; and Mrs. Bolton."

The old man did not answer, but he turned his face round to his son. "I hear that you had that man Crinkett out at Folking yesterday," said Robert.

"He was there, certainly, to my sorrow."

"And another with him?"

"Yes; and another with him, whom I had also known at Nobble."

"And they were brought in to breakfast?"

"Yes."

"And they afterwards declared that you had married a wife out there in the colony?"

"That also is true."

"They have been with my father this morning."

"I am very, very sorry, sir," said Caldigate, turning to the old man, "that you should have been troubled in so disagreeable a business."

"Now, Caldigate, I will tell you what we propose."

It was still the attorney who was speaking, for the old man had not as yet opened his mouth since his son-in-law had entered the room. "There can, I think, be no doubt that this woman intends to bring an accusation of bigamy against you."

"She is threatening to do it. I think it very improbable that she will be fool enough to make the attempt."

"From what I have heard I feel sure that the attempt will be made. Depositions, in fact, will be made before the magistrates some day this week. Crinkett and the woman have been with the mayor this morning, and have been told the way in which they should proceed." Caldigate, when he heard this, felt that he was trembling, but he looked into the speaker's face without allowing his eyes to turn to the right or left. "I am

not going to say anything now about the case itself. Indeed, as I know nothing, I can say nothing. You must provide yourself with a lawyer.”

“ You will not act for me ? ”

“ Certainly not. I must act for my sister. Now what I propose, and what her father proposes, is this,— that she shall return to her home at Puritan Grange while this question is being decided.”

“ Certainly not,” said the husband.

“ She must,” said the old man, speaking for the first time.

“ We shall compel it,” said the attorney.

“ Compel ! How will you compel it ? She is my wife.”

“ That has to be proved. Public opinion will compel it, if nothing else. You cannot make a prisoner of her.”

“ Oh, she shall go if she wishes it. You shall have free access to her. Bring her mother. Bring your carriage. She shall dispose of herself as she pleases. God forbid that I should keep her, though she be my wife, against her will.”

“ I am sure she will do as her friends shall advise her when she hears the story,” said the attorney.

“ She has heard the story. She knows it all. And I am sure that she will not stir a foot,” said the husband. “ You know nothing about her.” This he said turning to his wife’s half-brother ; and then again he turned to the old man. “ You, sir, no doubt, are well aware that she can be firm to her purpose. Nothing but death could take her away from me. If you were to carry her by force to Chesterton she would return to Folking on foot before the day was over. She knows what it is to be a wife. I am not a bit afraid of her

leaving me." This he was able to say with a high spirit and an assured voice.

"It is quite out of the question that she should stay with you while this is going on."

"Of course she must come away," said the banker, not looking at the man whom he now hated as thoroughly as did his wife.

"Consult your own friends, and let her consult hers. They will all tell you so. Ask Mrs. Babington. Ask your own father."

"I shall ask no one—but her."

"Think what her position will be! All the world will at least doubt whether she be your wife or not."

"There is one person who will not doubt,—and that is herself."

"Very good. If it be so, that will be a comfort to you, no doubt. But, for her sake, while other people doubt, will it not be better that she should be with her father and mother? Look at it all round."

"I think it would be better that she should be with me," replied Caldigate.

"Even though your former marriage with that other woman were proved?"

"I will not presume that to be possible. Though a jury should so decide, their decision would be wrong. Such an error could not affect us. I will not think of such a thing."

"And you do not perceive that her troubles will be lighter in her father's house than in yours?"

"Certainly not. To be away from her own house would be such a trouble to her that she would not endure it unless restrained by force."

"If you press her, she would go. Cannot you see that it would be better for her name?"

“Her name is my name,” he said, clenching his fist in his violence, “and my name is hers. She can have no good name distinct from me,—no name at all. She is part and parcel of my very self, and under no circumstances will I consent that she shall be torn away from me. No word from any human being shall persuade me to it,—unless it should come from herself.”

“We can make her,” said the old man.

“No doubt we could get an order from the Court,” said the attorney, thinking that anything might be fairly said in such an emergency as this; “but it will be better that she should come of her own accord, or by his direction. Are you aware how probable it is that you may be in prison within a day or two?”

To this Caldigate made no answer, but turned round to leave the room. He paused a moment at the doorway to think whether another word or two might not be said in behalf of his wife. It seemed hard to him, or hard rather upon her, that all the wide-stretching solid support of her family should be taken away from her at such a crisis as the present. He knew their enmity to himself. He could understand both the old enmity and that which had now been newly engendered. Both the one and the other were natural. He had succeeded in getting the girl away from her parents in opposition to both father and mother. And now, almost within the first year of his marriage, she had been brought to this terrible misery by means of disreputable people with whom he had been closely connected! Was it not natural that Robert Bolton should turn against him? If Hester had been his sister and there had come such an interloper what would he have felt? Was it not his duty to be gentle and to give way, if by any

giving way he could lessen the evil which he had occasioned. "I am sorry to have to leave your presence like this," he said, turning back to Mr. Bolton.

"Why did you ever come into my presence?"

"What has been done is done. Even if I would give her back, I cannot. For better or for worse she is mine. We cannot make it otherwise now. But understand this, when you ask that she shall come back to you, I do not refuse it on my own account. Though I should be miserable indeed were she to leave me, I will not even ask her to stay. But I know she will stay. Though I should try to drive her out, she would not go. Good-bye, sir." The old man only shook his head. "Good-bye, Robert."

"Good-bye. You had better get some lawyer as soon as you can. If you know anyone in London you should send for him. If not, Mr. Seely here is as good a man as you can have. He is no friend of mine, but he is a careful attorney who understands his business." Then Caldigate left the room with the intention of going at once to Mr. Seely.

But standing patiently at the door, just within the doorway of the house, he met a tall man in dark plain clothes, whom he at once knew to be a policeman. The man, who was aware that Caldigate was a county magistrate, civilly touched his hat, and then, with a few whispered words, expressed his opinion that our hero had better go with him to the mayor's office. Had he a warrant? Yes, he had a warrant, but he thought that probably it might not be necessary for him to show it. "I will go with you, of course," said Caldigate. "I suppose it is on the allegation of a man named Crinkett."

"A lady, sir, I think," said the policeman.

“ One Mrs. Smith? ”

“ She called herself—Caldigate, sir,” said the policeman. Then they went together without any further words to the mayor’s court, and from thence, before he heard the accusation made against him, he sent both for his father and for Mr. Seely.

He was taken through to a private room, and thither came at once the mayor and another magistrate of the town with whom he was acquainted. “ This is a very sad business, Mr. Caldigate,” said the mayor.

“ Very sad, indeed. I suppose I know all about it. Two men were with me yesterday threatening to indict me for bigamy if I did not give them a considerable sum of money. I can quite understand that they should have been here, as I know the nature of the evidence they can use. The policeman tells me the woman is here too.”

“ Oh yes;—she is here, and has made her deposition. Indeed, there are two men and another woman who all declare that they were present at her marriage.” Then, after some further conversation, the accusers were brought into the room before him, so that their depositions might be read to him. The woman was closely veiled, so that he could not see a feature of her face; but he knew her figure well, and he remembered the other woman who had been half-companion, half-servant to Euphemia Smith when she had come up to the diggings, and who had been with her both at Ahalala and at Nobble. The woman’s name, as he now brought to mind, was Anna Young. Crinkett also and Adamson followed them into the room, each of whom had made a deposition on the matter. “ Is this the Mr. Caldigate,” said the mayor, “ whom you claim as your husband? ”

"He is my husband," said the woman. "He and I were married at Ahalala in New South Wales."

"It is false," said Caldigate.

"Would you wish to see her face?" asked the mayor.

"No; I know her voice well. She is the woman in whose company I went out to the Colony, and whom I knew while I was there. It is not necessary that I should see her. What does she say?"

"That I am your wife, John Caldigate."

Then the deposition was read to him, which stated on the part of the woman, that on a certain day she was married to him by the Rev. Mr. Allan, a Wesleyan minister, at Ahalala, that the marriage took place in a tent belonging, as she believed, to Mr. Crinkett, and that Crinkett, Adamson, and Anna Young were all present at the marriage. Then the three persons thus named had taken their oaths and made their depositions to the same effect. And a document was produced, purporting to be a copy of the marriage certificate as made out by Mr. Allan, a copy of which she, the woman, stated that she obtained at the time, the register itself, which consisted simply of an entry in a small book, having been carried away by Mr. Allan in his pocket. Crinkett, when asked what had become of Mr. Allan, stated that he knew nothing but that he had left Ahalala. From that day to this none of them had heard of Mr. Allan.

Then the mayor gave Caldigate to understand that he must hold himself as committed to stand his trial for bigamy at the next Assizes for the County.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CONCLAVE AT PURITAN GRANGE

JOHN CALDIGATE was committed, and liberated on bail. This occurred in Cambridge on the Wednesday after the christening; and before the Saturday night following all the Boltons were thoroughly convinced that this wretched man, who had taken from them their daughter and their sister, was a bigamist, and that poor Hester, though a mother, was not a wife. The evidence against him, already named, was very strong, but they had been put in possession of other, and as they thought more damning evidence than any to which he had alluded in telling his version of the story to Robert Bolton. The woman had produced, and had shown to Robert Bolton, the envelope of a letter addressed in John Caldigate's handwriting to "Mrs. Caldigate, Ahalala, Nobble," which letter had been dated inside from Sydney, and which envelope bore the Sydney post-mark. Caldigate's handwriting was peculiar, and the attorney declared that he could himself swear to it. The letter itself she also produced, but it told less than the envelope. It began as such a letter might begin, "Dearest Feemy," and ended "Yours, ever and always, J. C." As she herself had pointed out, a man such as Caldigate does not usually call his wife by that most cherished name in writing to her. The letter itself referred almost altogether to money matters, though perhaps hardly to such as a man generally discusses with his

wife. Certain phrases seemed to imply a distinct action. She had better sell these shares or those if she could for a certain price,—and such like. But she explained that they both when they married had been possessed of mining shares, represented by scrip which passed from hand to hand readily, and that each still retained his or her own property. But among the various small documents which she had treasured up for use, should they be needed for some possible occasion such as this, was a note, which had not, indeed, been posted, but which purported to have been written by the minister, Allan, to Caldigate himself, offering to perform the marriage at Ahalala, but advising him to have the ceremony performed at some more settled place, where an established church community with a permanent church or chapel admitted the proper custody of registers. Nothing could be more sensible, or written in a better spirit than this letter, though the language was not that of an educated man. This letter, Caldigate had, she said, showed to her, and she had retained it. Then she brought forward two handkerchiefs which she herself had marked with her new name, Euphemia Caldigate, and the date of the year. This had been done, she declared, immediately after her marriage, and the handkerchiefs seemed by their appearance to justify the assertion. Caldigate had admitted a promise, admitted that he had lived with the woman, admitted that she had passed by his name, admitted that there had been a conversation with the clergyman in regard to his marriage. And now there were three others, besides the woman herself, who were ready to swear,—who had sworn,—that they had witnessed the ceremony!

A clerk had been sent out early in November by Robert and William Bolton to make inquiry in the

colony, and he could not well return before the end of March. And, if the accused man should ask for delay, it would hardly be possible to refuse the request, as it might be necessary for his defence that he, too, should get evidence from the colony. The next Assizes would be in April, and it would hardly be possible that the trial should take place so soon. And if not there would be a delay of three or four months more. Even that might hardly suffice should a plea be made on Caldigate's behalf that prolonged inquiry was indispensable. A thousand allegations might be made as to the characters of these witnesses,—characters which doubtless were open to criticism; as to the probability of forgery; as to the necessity of producing Allan, the clergyman; as to Mrs. Smith's former position,—whether or no she was in truth a widow when she was living at Ahalala. Richard Shand had been at Ahalala, and must have known the truth. Caldigate might well declare that Richard Shand's presence was essential to his defence. There would and must be delay.

But what, in the meantime, would be the condition of Hester,—Hester Bolton, as they feared that they would be bound in duty to call her,—of Hester and her infant? The thing was so full of real tragedy,—the true human nature of them all was so strongly affected, that for a time family jealousies and hatred had to give way. To father and mother and to the brothers, and to the brother's wife, it was equally a catastrophe, terrible, limitless, like an earthquake, or the falling upon them of some ruined tower. One thing was clear to them all,—that she and her child must be taken away from Folking. Her continued residence there would be a continuation of the horror. The man was not her husband. Not one of them was inspired by a feeling of

mercy to allege that, in spite of all that they had heard, he still might be her husband. Even Mrs. Robert, who had been most in favour of the Caldigate marriage, did not doubt for an instant. The man had been a gambler at home on racecourses, and then had become a gambler at the gold mines in the colony. His life then, by his own admission, had been disreputable. Who does not know that vices which may be treated with tenderness, almost with complaisance, while they are kept in the background, become monstrous, prodigious, awe-inspiring when they are made public. A gentleman shall casually let slip some profane word, and even some friendly parson standing by will think but little of it; but let the profane word, through some unfortunate accident, find its way into the newspapers, and the gentleman will be held to have disgraced himself almost for ever. Had nothing been said of a marriage between Caldigate and Mrs. Smith, little would have been thought by Robert Bolton, little perhaps by Robert Bolton's father, little even by Robert Bolton's wife of the unfortunate alliance which he had admitted. But now, everything was added to make a pile of wickedness as big as a mountain.

From the conclave which was held on Saturday at Puritan Grange to decide what should be done, it was impossible to exclude Mrs. Bolton. She was the young mother's mother, and how should she be excluded? From the first moment in which something of the truth reached her ears, it had become impossible to silence her or to exclude her. To her all those former faults would have been black as vice itself, even though there had been no question of a former marriage. Outside active sins, to which it may be presumed no temptation allured herself, were abominable to her. Evil thoughts,

hardness of heart, suspicions, unforgiveness, hatred, being too impalpable for denunciation in the Decalogue but lying nearer to the hearts of most men than murder, theft, adultery, and perjury, were not equally abhorrent to her. She had therefore allowed herself to believe all evil of this man, and from the very first had set him down in her heart as a hopeless sinner. The others had opposed her,—because the man had money. In the midst of her shipwreck, in the midst of her misery, through all her maternal agony, there was a certain triumph to her in this. She had been right,—right from first to last, right in everything. Her poor old husband was crushed by the feeling that they had, among them, allowed this miscreant to take their darling away from them,—that he himself had assented; but she had not assented; she was not crushed. Before Monday night all Cambridge had heard something of the story, and then it had been impossible to keep her in the dark. And now, when the conclave met, of course she was one. The old man was there, and Robert Bolton, and William the barrister, who had come down from London to give his advice, and both Mr. and Mrs. Daniel. Mrs. Daniel, of all the females of the family, was the readiest to endure the severity of the stepmother, and she was now giving what comfort she could by her attendance at the Grange.

“Of course she should come home,” said the barrister. Up to this moment no one had seen Hester since the evil tidings had been made known; but a messenger had been sent out to Folking with a long letter from her mother, in which the poor nameless one had been implored to come back with her baby to her old home till this matter had been settled. The writer had endeavoured to avoid the saying of hard things against

the sinner; but her feelings had been made very clear. "Your father and brothers and all of us think that you should come away from him while this is pending. Nay; we do not hesitate to say that it is your bounden duty to leave him."

"I will never, never leave my dearest, dearest husband. If they were to put my husband into gaol I would sit at the door till they had let him out." That, repeated over and over again, had been the purport of her reply. And that word "husband," she used in almost every line, having only too clearly observed that her mother had not used it at all. "Dearest mother," she said, ending her letter, "I love you as I have always done. But when I became his wife, I swore to love him best. I did not know then how strong my love could be. I have hardly known till now, when he is troubled, of what devotion I was capable. I will not leave him for a moment,—unless I have to do so at his telling."

Such being her determination, and so great her obstinacy, it was quite clear that they could not by soft words or persuasive letters bring her to their way of thinking. She would not submit to their authority, but would claim that as a married woman she owed obedience only to her husband. And it would certainly not be within their power to make her believe that she was not Caldigate's wife. They believed it. They felt that they knew the facts. To them any continuation of the alliance between their poor girl and the false traitor was abominable. They would have hung the man without a moment's thought of mercy had it been possible. There was nothing they would not have done to rescue their Hester from his power. But how was she to be rescued till the dilatory law should have

claimed its victim? "Can't she be made to come away by the police?" asked the mother.

The barrister shook his head. "Couldn't the magistrates give an order?" asked the father. Mr. Bolton had been a magistrate himself,—was one still indeed, although for some years he had not sat upon the bench,—but he had no very clear idea of a magistrate's power. The barrister again shook his head. "You seem to think that something of the kind could be done," he said, turning to Robert. When he wanted advice he would always turn to Robert, especially in the presence of the barrister, intending to show that he thought the lower branch of the profession to be at any rate more accurate than the higher.

"I said something about an order from the Vice-Chancellor. But I fear we should not succeed in getting it." The barrister again shook his head.

"Do you mean to say that nothing can be done?" exclaimed Mrs. Bolton, rising up from her seat; "that no steps can be taken?"

"If she were once here, perhaps you could—prevent her return," whispered the barrister.

"Persuade her not to go back," suggested Mrs. Daniel.

"Well;—that might come after a time. But I think you would have the feeling of the community with you if you succeeded;—well, not violence, you understand."

"No; not violence," said the father.

"I could be violent with him," said Mrs. Bolton.

"Just do not let her leave the house," continued the barrister. "Of course it would be disagreeable."

"I should not mind that," said Mrs. Bolton. "In doing my duty I could bear anything. To separate her from him I could undergo any trouble."

"But he would have the power to fetch her?" asked the father, doubtfully.

"No doubt;—by law he would have such power. But the magistrates would be very loth to assist him. The feeling of the community, as I said, would be in your favour. She would be cowed, and when once she was away from him he would probably feel averse to increase our enmity by taking strong measures for her recovery." Mrs. Bolton seemed to declare by her face that it would be quite impossible for him to increase her enmity.

"But we can't lock her up," said the old man.

"Practically you can. Take her bonnet away,—or whatever she came in. Don't let there be a vehicle to carry her back. Let the keys be turned if it be necessary. The servants must know of course what you are doing; but they will probably be on your side. I don't mean to say that if she be resolute to escape at any cost you can prevent her. But probably she will not be resolute like that. It requires a deal of resolution for a young woman to show herself in the streets alone in so wretched a plight as hers. It depends on her disposition."

"She is very determined," said Hester's mother.

"And you can be equally so." To this assertion Mrs. Bolton assented with a little nod. "You can only try it. It is one of those cases in which unfortunately publicity cannot be avoided. We have to do the best we can for her, poor dear, according to our conscience. I should induce her to come on a visit to her mother, and then I should, if possible, detain her."

It was thus that William Bolton gave his advice; and as Robert Bolton assented, it was determined that this should be the line of action. Nor can it be said that

they were either cruel or unloving in their projected scheme. Believing as they did that the man was not her husband, it must be admitted that it was their duty to take her away from him if possible. But it was not probable that Hester herself would look upon their care of her in the same light. She would beat herself against the bars of the cage; and even should she be prevented from escaping by the motives and reasons which William Bolton had suggested, she would not the less regard her father and mother as wicked tyrants. The mother understood that very well. And she, though she was hard to all the world besides, had never been hard to her girl. No tenderest female bosom that ever panted at injustice done to her offspring was more full than hers of pity, love, and desire. To save her Hester from sin and suffering she would willingly lay down her life. And she knew that in carrying out the scheme that had been proposed she must appear to her girl to be an enemy,—to be the bitterest of all enemies! I have seen a mother force open the convulsively closed jaws of her child in order that some agonising torture might be applied,—which, though agonising, would tend to save her sick infant's life. She did it though the child shrank from her as from some torturing fiend. This mother resolved that she would do the same,—though her child, too, should learn to hate her.

William Bolton undertook to go out to Folking and give the invitation by which she was to be allured to come to Puritan Grange,—only for a day and night if longer absence was objectionable; only for a morning visit, if no more could be achieved. It was all treachery and falsehood;—a doing of certain evil that possible good might come from it. "She will hate me for ever, but yet it ought to be done," said William Bolton; who

was a good man, an excellent husband and father, and regarded in his own profession as an honourable trustworthy man.

"She will never stay," the old man said to his wife, when the others had gone and they two were left together.

"I don't know."

"I am sure she will never stay."

"I will try."

Mrs. Robert said the same thing when the scheme was explained to her. "Do you think anybody could keep me a prisoner against my will—unless they locked me up in a cell? Do you think I would not scream?"

The husband endeavoured to explain that the screaming might depend on the causes which had produced the coercion. "I think you would scream and scream till you were let loose, if the person locking you up had nothing to justify him. But if you felt that the world would be all against you, then you would not scream and would not be let out."

Mrs. Robert, however, seemed to think that no one could keep her in any house against her own will without positive bolts, bars, and chains.

In the meantime much had been settled out at Folking, or had been settled at Cambridge, so that the details were known at Folking. Mr. Seely had taken up the case, and had of course gone into it with much more minuteness than Robert Bolton had done. Caldgate owned to the writing of the envelope, and to the writing of the letter, but declared that that letter had not been sent in that envelope. He had written the envelope in some foolish joke while at Ahalala,—he remembered doing it well; but he was quite sure that it had never passed through the Sydney post-office. The letter itself had been written from Sydney. He remembered writ-

ing that also, and he remembered posting it at Sydney in an envelope addressed to Mrs. Smith. When Mr. Seely assured him that he himself had seen the post-office stamp of Sydney on the cover, Caldigate declared that it must have been passed through the post-office for fraudulent purposes after it had left his hands. "Then," said Mr. Seely, "the fraud must have been meditated and prepared three years ago,—which is hardly probable."

As to the letter from the clergyman, Allan, of which Mr. Seely had procured a copy, Caldigate declared that it had certainly never been addressed to him. He had never received any letter from Mr. Allan,—had never seen the man's handwriting. He was quite sure that if he were in New South Wales he could get a dozen people to swear that there had never been such a marriage at Ahalala. He did name many people, especially Dick Shand. Then Mr. Seely proposed to send out an agent to the colony, who should take the depositions of such witnesses as he could find, and who should if possible bring Dick Shand back with him. And, at whatever cost, search should be made for Mr. Allan; and Mr. Allan should, if found, be brought to England, if money could bring him. If Mr. Allan could not be found, some document written by him might perhaps be obtained with reference to his handwriting. But, through it all, Mr. Seely did believe that there had been some marriage ceremony between his client and Mrs. Euphemia Smith.

All this, down to the smallest detail, was told to Hester,—Hester Bolton or Hester Caldigate, whichever she might be. And there was no word uttered by the man she claimed as her husband which she did not believe as though it were gospel.

CHAPTER XXXI

HESTER IS LURED BACK

ON the Monday morning, Mr. William Bolton, the barrister, who had much to his own inconvenience remained at Cambridge for the purpose of carrying out the scheme which he had proposed, went over to Folking in a fly. He had never been at the place before, and was personally less well acquainted with the family into which his sister had married than any other Bolton. Had everything been pleasant, nothing could have been more natural than such a visit, but as things were very far from pleasant Hester was much surprised when he was shown into her room. It had been known to Robert Bolton that Caldigate now came every day into Cambridge to see either his lawyer or his father, and that therefore he would certainly not be found at home about the middle of the day. It was henceforth to be a law with all the Boltons, at any rate till after the trial, that they would not speak to, or if possible see, John Caldigate. Not without very strong cause would William Bolton have entered his house, but that strong cause existed.

"Oh, William! I am so glad to see you," said Hester, rushing into her brother's arms.

"I too am glad to see you, Hester, though the time is so sad to us all."

"Yes, yes. It is sad; oh, so sad! Is it not terrible that there should be people so wicked, and that they

should be able to cause so much trouble to innocent persons."

"With all my heart I feel for you," said the brother, caressing his young sister.

With quickest instinct she immediately perceived that a slight emphasis given to the word "you" implied the singular number. She drew herself back a little, still feeling, however, that no offence had as yet been committed against which she could express her indignation. But it was necessary that a protest should be made at once. "I am so sorry that my husband is not here to welcome you. He has gone into Cambridge to fetch his father. Poor Mr. Caldigate is so troubled by all this that he prefers now to come and stay with us."

"Ah, indeed; I daresay it will be better that the father and the son should be together."

"Father and son, or even mother and daughter, are not like husbands and wives, are they?"

"No; they are not," said the barrister, not quite knowing how to answer so very self-evident a proposition, but understanding accurately the line of thought which had rendered the poor creature to reassert at every moment the bond by which she would fain be bound to the father of her child.

"But Mr. Caldigate is so good,—so good and gentle to me and baby, that I am delighted that he should be here with John. You know of all this."

"Yes, I know, of course."

"And will feel all that John has to suffer."

"It is very bad, very bad for everybody concerned. By his own showing his conduct——"

"William," said she, "let this be settled in one word. I will not hear a syllable against my husband from you or anyone else. I am delighted to see you,—I cannot

tell you how delighted. Oh, if papa would come,—or mamma! Dear, dear mamma! You don't suppose but what I love you all!"

"I am sure you do."

"But not from papa or mamma even will I hear a word against him. Would Fanny,"—Fanny was the barrister's wife—"let her people come and say things behind your back?"

"I hope not."

"Then, believe that I can be as stout as Fanny. But we need not quarrel. You will come and see baby, and have some lunch. I am afraid they will not be here till three or four, but they will be so glad to see you if you will wait."

He would not wait, of course; but he allowed himself to be taken away to see baby, and did eat his lunch. Then he brought forward the purport of his mission. "Your mother is most anxious to see you, Hester. You will go and visit her?"

"Oh, yes," said Hester, unaware of any danger. "But I wish she would come to me."

"My dear girl, as things are at present that is impossible. You can understand as much as that. There must be a trial."

"I suppose so."

"And till that has been held your mother would be wrong to come here. I express no judgment against anyone."

"I should have thought mamma would have been the first to support me,—me and baby," she said, sobbing.

"Certainly. If you were homeless——"

"But I am not. My husband gives me a house to live in, and I want none other."

"What I wish to explain is that if you were in want of anything——"

"I am in want of nothing—but sympathy."

"You have it from me and from all of us. But pray, listen for a moment. She cannot come to you till the trial be over. I am sure, Mr. Caldigate would understand that."

"He comes to me," she said, alluding to her father-in-law, and not choosing to understand that her brother should have called her husband "Mr. Caldigate."

"But there can be no reason why you should not go to Chesterton."

"Just to see mamma?"

"For a day or two," he replied, blushing inwardly at his own lie. "Could you go to-morrow?"

"Oh no;—not to stay. Of course I must ask my husband. I'm sure he'll let me go if I ask it, but not to-morrow. Why to-morrow?"

"Only that your mother longs to see you." He had been specially instigated to induce her to come as soon as possible. "You may imagine how anxious she is."

"Poor mamma! Yes;—I know she suffers. I know mamma's feelings. Mamma and I must, must, must quarrel if we talk about this. Of course I will go to see her. But will you tell her this,—that if she cannot speak of my husband with affection and respect it will be better that—she should not mention him at all. I will not submit to a word even from her."

When he took his departure it was settled that she should, with her husband's permission, go over to Chesterton for a couple of nights in the course of the next week; but that she could not fix the day till she had seen him. Then, when he was taking his departure and kissing her once again, she whispered a word to

him. "Try and be charitable, William. I sometimes think that at Chesterton we hardly knew what charity meant."

That evening the proposed visit to Chesterton was discussed at Folking. The old man had very strongly taken up his son's side, and was of opinion that the Bolton's were not only uncharitable, but perversely ill-conditioned in the view which they took. To his thinking, Crinkett, Adamson, and the woman were greedy, fraudulent scoundrels, who had brought forward this charge solely with the view of extorting money. He declared that the very fact that they had begun by asking for money should have barred their evidence before any magistrates. The oaths of the four "scoundrels" were, according to him, worth nothing. The scrap of paper purporting to be a copy of the marriage certificate, and the clergyman's pretended letter were mere forgeries, having about them no evidence or probability of truth. Anyone could have written them. As to that envelope addressed to Mrs. Caldigate, with the Sydney postmark, he had his own theory. He thought but little of the intercourse which his son acknowledged with the woman, but was of opinion that his son "had been an ass" in writing those words. But a man does not marry a woman by simply writing his own name with the word mistress prefixed to it on an envelope. Any other woman might have adduced the envelope as evidence of his marriage with her! It was, he said, monstrous that anyone should give credence to such bundles of lies. Therefore his words were gospel, and his wishes were laws to Hester. She clung round him, and hovered over him, and patted him like a very daughter, insisting that he should nurse the baby, and talking of him to her husband as though he

were manifestly the wisest man in Cambridgeshire. She forgot even that little flaw in his religious belief. To her thinking at the present moment, a man who would believe that her baby was the honest son of an honest father and mother had almost religion enough for all purposes.

"Quite right that you should go," said the old man.

"I think so," said the husband, "though I am afraid they will trouble her."

"The only question is whether they will let her come back."

"What!" exclaimed Hester.

"Whether they won't keep you when they've got you."

"I won't be kept. I will come back. You don't suppose I'd let them talk me over?"

"No, my dear; I don't think they'll be able to do that. But there are such things as bolts and bars."

"Impossible!" said his son.

"Do you mean that they'll send me to prison?" asked Hester.

"No; they can't do that. They wouldn't take you in at the county jail, but they might make a prison of Puritan Grange. I don't say they will, but they might try it."

"I should get out, of course."

"I daresay you would; but there might be trouble."

"Papa would not allow that," said Hester. "Papa understands better than that. I've a right to go where I like, just as anybody else;—that is, if John tells me." The matter was discussed at some length, but John Caldigate was of opinion that no such attempt as the old man had suggested was probable,—or even possible. The idea that in these days anyone should be kept a

prisoner in a private house,—anyone over whom no one in that house possessed legitimate authority,—seemed to him to be monstrous. That a husband should lock up his wife might be possible, or a father his unmarried and dependent daughter; but that anyone should venture to lock up another man's wife was, he declared, out of the question. Mr. Caldigate again said that he should not be surprised if it were attempted; but acknowledged that the attempt could hardly be successful.

As Hester was anxious to make the visit, it was arranged that she should go. It was not that she expected much pleasure even in seeing her mother;—but that it was expedient at such a time to maintain what fellowship might still be possible with her own family. The trial would of course liberate them from all their trouble; and then, when the trial should be over, it would be very sad if an entire rupture between herself and her parents should have been created. She would be true to her husband; as true as a part must be to the whole, as the heart must be to the brain. They two were, and ever would be, one. But if her mother could be spared to her, if she could be saved from a lasting quarrel with her mother, it would be so much to her! Tears came into the eyes even of the old man as he assented; and her husband swore to her that for her sake he would forgive every injury from anyone bearing the name of Bolton when all this should be over.

A day was therefore fixed, and a note was written, and on the last day of February she and her baby and her nurse were taken over to Puritan Grange. In the meantime telegrams at a very great cost had been flying backwards and forwards between Cambridge and Sydney. William and Robert Bolton had determined

among them that, at whatever expense to the family, the truth must be ascertained; and to this the old banker had assented. So far they were right no doubt. If the daughter and sister was not in truth a wife,—if by grossest, by most cruel ill-usage she had been lured to a ruin for which there could be no remedy in this world,—it would be better that the fact should be known at once, so that her life might be pure though it could never again be bright. But it was strange that, with all these Boltons, there was a desire, an anxiety, to prove the man's guilt rather than his innocence. Mrs. Bolton had always regarded him as a guilty man, —though guilty of she knew not what. She had always predicted misery from a marriage so distasteful to her; and her husband, though he had been brought to oppose her and to sanction the marriage, had, from the moment in which the sanction was given, been induced by her influence to reject it. Robert Bolton, when the charge was first made, when the letter from the woman was first shown to him, had become aware that he had made a mistake in allowing this trouble to come upon the family, and then, as from point to point, the evidence had been opened out to him, he had gradually convinced himself that the son-in-law and brother-in-law, whom he had, as it were, forced into the family, was a bigamist. There was present to them all an intense desire to prove the man's guilt, which was startling to all around who heard anything of the matter. Up to this time the Bolton telegrams and the Caldgate telegrams had elicited two facts,—that Allan the Wesleyan minister had gone to the Fiji Islands and had there died, and that they at Nobble who had last known Dick Shand's address, now knew it no longer. Caldgate had himself gone to Pollington, and had there as-

certained that no tidings had been received from Dick by any of the Shand family for the last twelve months. It had been decided that the trial must be postponed at any rate till the summer Assizes, which would be held in Cambridge about the last week in August; and it was thought by some that even then the case would not be ready. There was, no doubt, an opinion prevalent in Cambridge that the unfortunate young mother should be taken home to her own family till the matter should be decided; and among the ladies of the town John Caldigate himself was blamed severely for not allowing her to place herself under her father's protection; but the ladies of the town generally were not probably well acquainted with the disposition and temper of the young wife herself.

Things were in this condition when Hester and her baby went to her father's house. Though that suspicion as to some intended durance which Mr. Caldigate had expressed was not credited by her, still, as she was driven up to the house, the idea was in her mind. She looked at the door and she looked at the window, and she could not conceive it possible that such a thing should be attempted. She thought of her own knowledge of the house; how, if it were necessary, she could escape from the back of the garden into the little field running down to the river, and how she could cross the ferry. Of course she knew every outlet and inlet about the place, and was sure that confinement would be impossible. But she did not think of her bonnet nor of her boots, nor of the horror which it would be to her should she be driven to wander forth into the town, and to seek a conveyance back to Folking in the public streets.

She went on a Monday with an understanding that

she was to remain there till Wednesday. Mrs. Bolton almost wished that a shorter visit had been arranged in order that she might at once commence her hostile operations without any intermediate and hypocritical pretences. She had planned her campaign thoroughly in her own mind, and had taken the cook into her confidence, the cook being the oldest and most religious servant in the house. When the day of departure should have come the cook was to lock the doors, and the gardener was to close the little gate at the bottom of the garden; and the bonnet and other things were to be removed, and then the mother would declare her purpose. But in the meantime allusions to that intended return to Folking must be accepted, and listened to with false assent. It was very grievous, but so it was arranged. As soon as Hester was in the house the mother felt how much better it would have been to declare to her daughter at once that she was a prisoner;—but it was then too late to alter their proposed plans.

It very nearly came to pass that Hester left her mother on the morning of her arrival. They had both determined to be cautious, reticent, and forbearing, but the difference between them was so vital that reticence was impossible. At first there was a profusion of natural tears, and a profusion of embraces. Each clung to the other for a while as though some feeling might be satisfied by mere contact; and then the woe of the thing, the woe of it, was acknowledged on both sides! They could agree that the wickedness of the wicked was very wicked. Wherever might lie the sin of fraud and falsehood, the unmerited misfortunes of poor Hester were palpable enough. They could weep together over the wrongs inflicted on that darling baby. But by degrees it was impossible to ab-

stain from alluding to the cause of their sorrow; — and such allusion became absolutely necessary when an attempt was made to persuade Hester to remain at her old home with her own consent. This was done by her father on the evening of her arrival, in compliance with the plan that had been arranged. “No, papa, no; I cannot do that,” she said, with a tone of angry determination.

“It is your duty, Hester. All your friends will tell you so.”

“My duty is to my husband,” she said, “and in such a matter I can allow myself to listen to no other friend.” She was so firm and fixed in this that he did not even dare to go on with his expostulation.

But afterwards, when they were upstairs together, Mrs. Bolton spoke out more at length and with more energy. “Mamma, it is of no use,” said Hester.

“It ought to be of use. Do you know the position in which you are?”

“Very well. I am my husband’s wife.”

“If it be so, well. But if it be not so, and if you remain with him while there is a doubt upon the matter, then you are his mistress.”

“If I am not his wife, then I will be his mistress,” said Hester, standing up and looking as she spoke much as her mother would look in her most determined moments.

“My child!”

“What is the use of all this, mamma? Nothing shall make me leave him. Others may be ashamed of me; but because of this I shall never be ashamed of myself. You are ashamed of me!”

“If you could mean what you said just now I should be ashamed of you.”

"I do mean it. Though the juries and the judges should say that he was not my husband, though all the judges in England should say it, I would not believe them. They may put him in prison and so divide us; but they never shall divide my bone from his bone, and my flesh from his flesh. As you are ashamed of me, I had better go back to-morrow."

Then Mrs. Bolton determined that early in the morning she would look to the bolts and bars; but when the morning came matters had softened themselves a little.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BABINGTON WEDDING

"It's your duty,—especially your duty,—to separate them." This was said by Mr. Smirkie, the vicar of Plum-cum-Pippin, to Mr. Bromley, the rector of Utterden, and the words were spoken in the park at Babington where the two clergymen were taking a walk together. Mr. Smirkie's first wife had been a Miss Bromley, a sister of the clergyman at Utterden, and as Julia Babington was anxious to take to her bosom all her future husband's past belongings, Mr. Bromley had been invited to Babington. It might be that Aunt Polly was at this time well inclined to exercise her hospitality in this direction by a feeling that Mr. Bromley would be able to talk to them about this terrible affair. Mr. Bromley was intimate with John Caldigate, and of course would know all about it. There was naturally in Aunt Polly's heart a certain amount of self-congratulation at the way in which things were going. Mr. Smirkie, no doubt, had had a former wife, but no one would call him a bigamist. In what a condition might her poor Julia have been put but for that interposition of Providence! For Aunt Polly regarded poor Hester Bolton as having been quite a providential incident, furnished expressly for the salvation of Julia. Hitherto Mr. Bromley had been very short in his expressions respecting the Folking tragedy, having simply declared that, judging by character, he could not con-

ceive that a man such as Caldigate would have been guilty of such a crime. But now he was being put through his facings more closely by his brother-in-law.

"Why should I want to separate them?"

"Because the evidence of his guilt is so strong."

"That is for a jury to judge."

"Yes; and if a jury should decide that there had been no Australian marriage,—which I fear we can hardly hope;—but if a jury were to decide that, then of course she could go back to him. But while there is a doubt, I should have thought, Tom, you certainly would have seen it, even though you never have had a wife of your own."

"I think I see all that there is to see," said the other. "If the poor lady has been deceived and betrayed no punishment can be too heavy for the man who has so injured her. But the very enormity of the iniquity makes me doubt it. As far as I can judge, Caldigate is a high-spirited, honest gentleman, to whom the perpetration of so great a sin would hardly suggest itself."

"But if,—but if—! Think of her condition, Tom!"

"You would have to think of your own, if you were to attempt to tell her to leave him."

"That means that you are afraid of her."

"It certainly means that I should be very much afraid if I thought of taking such a liberty. If I believed it to be my duty, I hope that I would do it."

"You are her clergyman."

"Certainly. I christened her child. I preach to her twice every Sunday. And if she were to die I should bury her."

"Is that all?"

“Pretty nearly; except that I generally dine at the house once a week.”

“Is there nothing further confided to you than that?”

“If she were to come to me for advice, then it would be my duty to give her what advice I thought to be best; and then——”

“Well, then?”

“Then I should have to make up my mind,—which I have not done at present,—I should have to make up my mind, not as to his guilt, for I believe him to be innocent, but as to the expediency of a separation till a jury should have acquitted him. But I am well aware that she won't come to me; and from little words which constantly drop from her, I am quite sure that nothing would induce her to leave her husband but a direct command from himself.”

“You might do it through him.”

“I am equally sure that nothing would induce him to send her away.”

But such a conviction as this was not sufficient for Mr. Smirkie. He was alive to the fact,—uncomfortably alive to the fact,—that the ordinary life of gentlefolk in England does not admit of direct clerical interference. As a country clergyman, he could bestow his admonitions upon his poorer neighbours, but upon those who were well-to-do he could not intrude himself unasked, unless, as he thought, in cases of great emergency. Here was a case of very great emergency. He was sure that he would have courage for the occasion if Folking were within the bounds of Plum-cum-Pippin. It was just the case in which counsel should be volunteered;—in which so much could be said which would be gross impertinence from others though it might be so manifest a duty to a clergyman!

But Mr. Bromley could not be aroused to a sense either of his duty or of his privileges. All this was sad to Mr. Smirkie, who regretted those past days in which, as he believed, the delinquent soul had been as manifestly subject to ecclesiastical interference as the delinquent body has always been to the civil law.

But with Julia, who was to be his wife, he could be more imperative. She was taught to give thanks before the throne of grace because she had been spared the ignominy of being married to a man who could not have made her his wife, and had had an unstained clergyman of the Church of England given to her for her protection. For with that candour which is so delightful, and so common in these days, everything had been told to Mr. Smirkie,—how her young heart had for a time turned itself towards her cousin, how she had been deceived, and then how rejoiced she was that by such deceit she had been reserved for her present more glorious fate. “And won’t Mr. Bromley speak to her?” Julia asked.

“It is a very difficult question,—a very difficult question, indeed,” said Mr. Smirkie, shaking his head. He was quite sure that were Folking in his parish he would perform the duty, though Mr. Caldgate and the unfortunate lady might be as a lion and a lioness in opposition to him; but he was also of opinion that sacerdotal differences of opinion should not be discussed among laymen,—should not be discussed by a clergyman even with the wife of his bosom.

At Babington opinion was somewhat divided. Aunt Polly and Julia were of course certain that John Caldgate had married the woman in Australia. But the two other girls and their father were not at all so sure. Indeed, there had been a little misunderstanding

among the Babingtons on the subject, which was perhaps strengthened by the fact that Mr. Smirkie had more endeared himself to Julia's mother than to Julia's father or sisters, and that Mr. Smirkie himself was very clear as to the criminality of the bigamist. "I suppose you are often there," Mr. Babington said to his guest, the parson of Utterden.

"Yes; I have seen a good deal of them."

"Do you think it possible?"

"Not probable," said the clergyman.

"I don't," said the squire. "I suppose he was a little wild out there, but that is a very different thing from bigamy. Young men, when they get out to those places, are not quite so particular as they ought to be, I daresay. When I was young, perhaps I was not as steady as I ought to have been. But, by George! here is a man comes over and asks for a lot of money; and then the woman asks for money; and then they say that if they don't get it, they'll swear the fellow was married in Australia. I can't fancy that any jury will believe that."

"I hope not."

"And yet Madame,"—the Squire was in the habit of calling his wife Madame when he intended to insinuate anything against her,—“has got it settled in her head that this young woman isn't his wife at all. I think it's uncommon hard. A man ought to be considered innocent till he has been found guilty. I shall go over and see him one of these days, and say a kind word to her."

There was at that moment some little difference of opinion, which was coming to a head in reference to a very delicate matter. When the conversations above related took place, the Babington wedding had been

fixed to take place in a week's time. Should cousin John be invited, or should he not. Julia was decidedly against it. "She did not think," she said, "that she could stand up at the altar and conduct herself on an occasion so trying if she were aware that he were standing by her." Mr. Smirkie, of course, was not asked,—was not directly asked. But equally, of course, he was able to convey his own opinion through his future bride. Aunt Polly thought that the county would be shocked if a man charged with bigamy was allowed to be present at the marriage. But the Squire was a man who could have an opinion of his own; and after having elicited that of Mr. Bromley, insisted that the invitation should be sent.

"It will be a pollution," said Julia, sternly, to her younger sisters.

"You will be a married woman almost before you have seen him," said Georgiana, the second, "and so it won't matter so much to you. We must get over it as we can."

Julia had been thought by her sisters not to bear the Smirkie triumph with sufficient humility; and they, therefore, were sometimes a little harsh to her. "I don't think you understand it at all," said Julia. "You have no conception what should be the feelings of a married woman, especially when she is going to become the wife of one of God's ministers."

But in spite of all this, Aunt Polly wrote to her nephew as follows:

"DEAR JOHN,—Our dearest Julia is to be married on Tuesday next. You know how anxious we all have been to maintain affectionate family relations with you, and we therefore do not like the idea of our sweet

child passing from her present sphere to other duties without your presence. Will you come over on Monday evening, and stay till after the breakfast? It is astonishing how many of our friends from the two counties have expressed their wish to grace the ceremony by their company. I doubt whether there is a clergyman in the diocese of Ely more respected and thought of by all the upper classes than Augustus Smirkie.

"I do not ask Mrs. Caldigate, because, under present circumstances, she would not perhaps wish to go into company, and because Augustus has never yet had an opportunity of making her acquaintance. I will only say that it is the anxious wish of us all here that you and she together may soon see the end of these terrible troubles.—Believe me to be, your affectionate aunt,

"MARYANNE BABINGTON."

The writing of this letter had not been effected without much difficulty. The Squire himself was not good at the writing of letters, and, though he did insist on seeing this epistle, so that he might be satisfied that Caldigate had been asked in good faith, he did not know how to propose alterations. "That's all my eye," he said, referring to his son-in-law that was to be. "He's as good as another, but I don't know that he's any better."

"That, my dear," said Aunt Polly, "is because you do not interest yourself about such matters. If you had heard what the Archdeacon said of him the other day, you would think differently."

"He's another parson," said the Squire. "Of course they butter each other up." Then he went on to the

other paragraph. "I wouldn't have said anything about his wife."

"That would not have been civil," said Aunt Polly; "and as you insist on my asking him, I do not wish to be rude." And so the letter was sent as it was written.

It reached Caldigate on the day which Hester was passing with her mother at Chesterton,—on the Tuesday. She had left Folking on the Monday, intending to return on the Wednesday. Caldigate was therefore alone with his father. "They might as well have left that undone," said he, throwing the letter over the table.

"It's about the silliest letter I ever read," said the old Squire; "but it is intended for civility. She means to show that she does not condemn you. There are many people who do not know when to speak and when to be silent. I shouldn't go."

"No, I shan't go."

"But I should take it as meant in kindness."

Then John Caldigate wrote back as follows:

"All this that has befallen my wife and me prevents us from going anywhere. She is at the present moment with her own people at Chesterton, but when she returns I shall not leave her. Give my kindest love to Julia, and ask her from me to accept the little present which I send her."

Julia declared that she would much rather not have accepted the brooch, and that she would never wear it. But animosity against such articles wears itself out quickly, and it may be expected that the little ornament will be seen in the houses of the Suffolk gentry among whom Mr. Smirkie is so popular.

Whether it was Mr. Smirkie's popularity, or the general estimation in which the Babington family were held, or the delight which is taken by the world at large in weddings, there was a very great gathering at Babington church, and in the Squire's house afterwards. Though it was early in March,—a time of the year which, in the eastern counties of England, is not altogether propitious to out-of-doors festivity,—though the roads were muddy, and the park sloppy, and the church abominably open to draughts, still there was a crowd. The young ladies in that part of the world had been slow in marrying lately, and it was felt that the present occasion might give a little fillip to the neighbourhood. This was the second Suffolk young lady that Mr. Smirkie had married, and he was therefore entitled to popularity. He had certainly done as much as he could, and there was probably no one around who had done more.

"I think the dear child will be happy," said Mrs. Babington to her old friend, Mrs. Munday,—the wife of Archdeacon Munday, the clerical dignitary who had given Mr. Smirkie so good a character.

"Of course she will," said Mrs. Munday, who had already given three daughters in marriage to three clergymen, and who had, as it were, become used to the transfer.

"And that she will do her duty in it."

"Why not? There's nothing difficult in it if she only sees that he has his surplice and bands properly got up. He is not, on the whole, a bad-tempered man; and though the children are rough, they'll grow out of that. And she ought to make him take two, or perhaps three, glasses of port wine on Sundays. Mr. Smirkie is not as young as he used to be, and two

the
were
I at
ring
ter-
the
not
ph
ic
a
I

whol duties, with the Sunday school, which must be looked into, do take a good deal out of a man. The Archdeacon, of course, has a curate; but I suppose Mr. Smirkie could hardly manage that just at present?"

The views which had hitherto been taken at Babington of the bride's future life had been somewhat loiter than this. The bands and the surplice and the port wine seemed to be small after all that had been said. The mother felt that she was in some degree rebuked,—not having yet learned that nothing will so much lessen the enthusiasm one may feel for the work of a barrister, or a member of Parliament, or a clergyman, as a little domestic conversation with the wife of the one or the other. But Mrs. Munday was a lady possessing much clerical authority, and that which she said had to be endured with equanimity.

Mr. Smirkie seemed to enjoy the occasion, and held his own through the day with much dignity. The Archdeacon and the clergyman of the parish, and Mr. Bromley, all assisted, and nothing was wanting of outward ceremony which a small country church could supply. When his health was drunk at the breakfast he preached quite a little sermon as he returned thanks, holding his bride's hands in his the while, performing his part in the scene in a manner which no one else would have dared to attempt.

Then there was the parting between the mother and daughter, upstairs, before she was taken away for her ten days' wedding tour to Brighton. "My darling;—it is not so far but that I can come and see you very often."

"Pray do, mamma."

"And I think I can help you with the children."

"I am not a bit afraid of them, mamma. I intend

1

to have my way with them, and that will be every thing. I don't mean to be weak. Of course Augustus will do what he thinks best in the parish, but he quite understands that I am to be mistress at home. As for Mrs. Munday, mamma, I don't suppose that she knows every thing. I believe I can manage quite as well as Mrs. Munday."

Then there was a parting joint congratulation that she had not yielded to the allurements of her cousin, John Caldigate. "Oh, no, mamma; that would never have done."

"Think where you might have been now."

"I am sure I should have found out his character in time and have broken from him, let it have cost what it might. A man that can do such things as that is to me quite horrible. What is to become of her, and her baby;—and, perhaps, two," she added in a whisper, holding up her hands and shaking her head. The ceremony through which she had just passed had given her courage to hint at such a possibility. "I suppose she will have to be called Miss Bolton again." Of course there was some well-founded triumph in the bosom of the undoubted Mrs. Augustus Smirkie as she remembered what her own fate might have been. Then she was carried away in the family carriage, amidst a deluge of rice and a shower of old shoes.

That same night Mr. Bromley gave an account of the wedding to John Caldigate at Folking, telling him how well all the personages had performed their parts. "Poor Julia; she at any rate will be safe."

"Safe enough, I should think," said the clergyman

"What I mean is that she has no dangers to fear such as my poor wife has encountered. Whoever

think of now I cannot but compare them to ourselves. No woman surely was ever so ill-used as she, and no man ever so unfortunate as myself."

"It will be all over in August."

"And where shall I be? My own lawyer tells me that it is too probable that I shall be in prison. And where will she be then?"



827 T4 3J
John Colledge

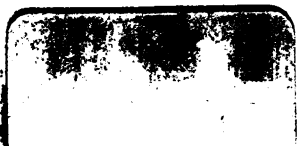
800377

3 2044 007 852 072

827
T 4
3J
v.1

Trollope

XI/95





827 T4 3J
John Colledge

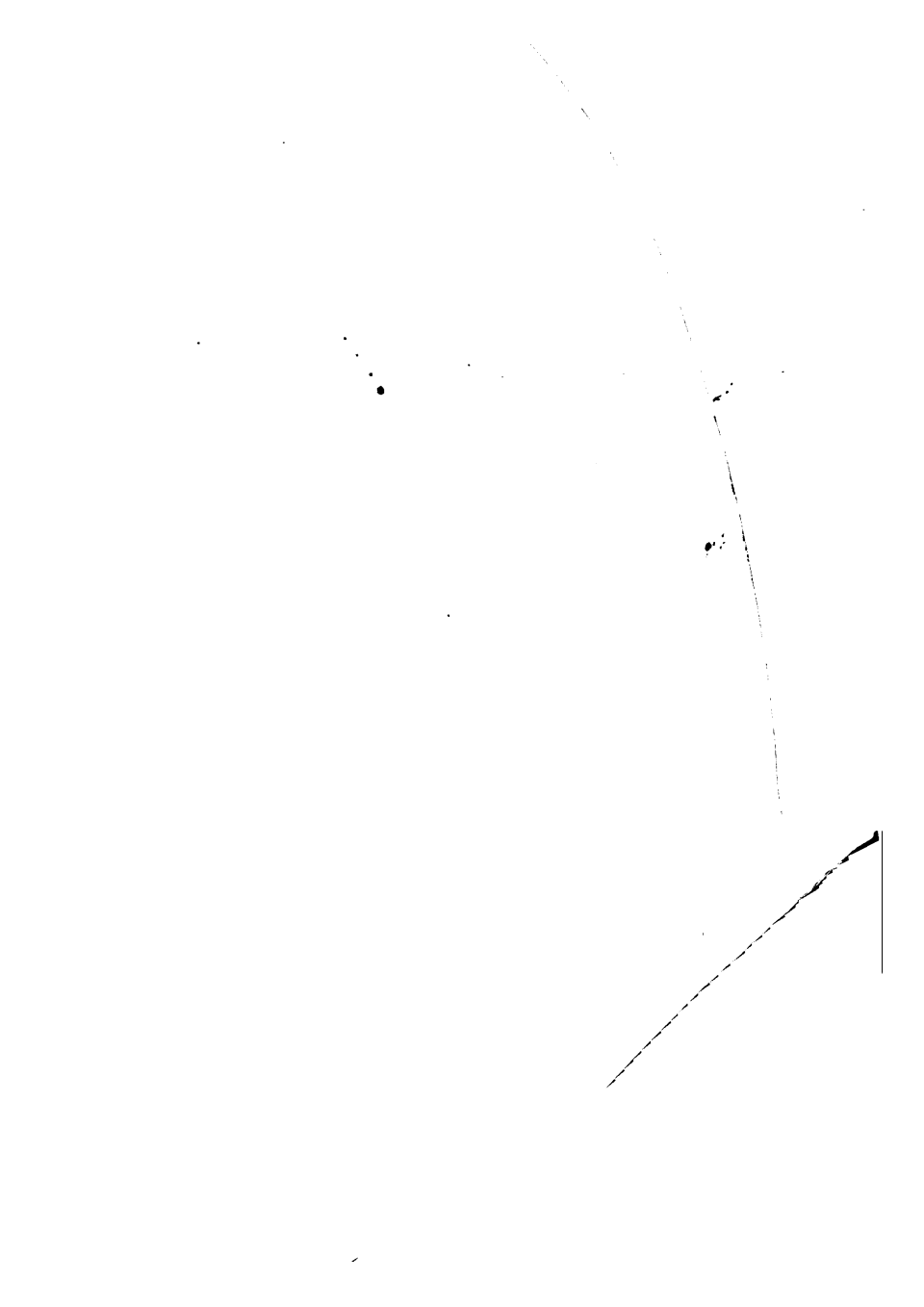
AG05727

3 2044 007 852 072

827
T 4
3J
v.1

Trollope

XI/95



827 T4 3J
John Calligato



3 2044 007 852 072

827
T 4
3J
v.1

Trollope

XI/95

